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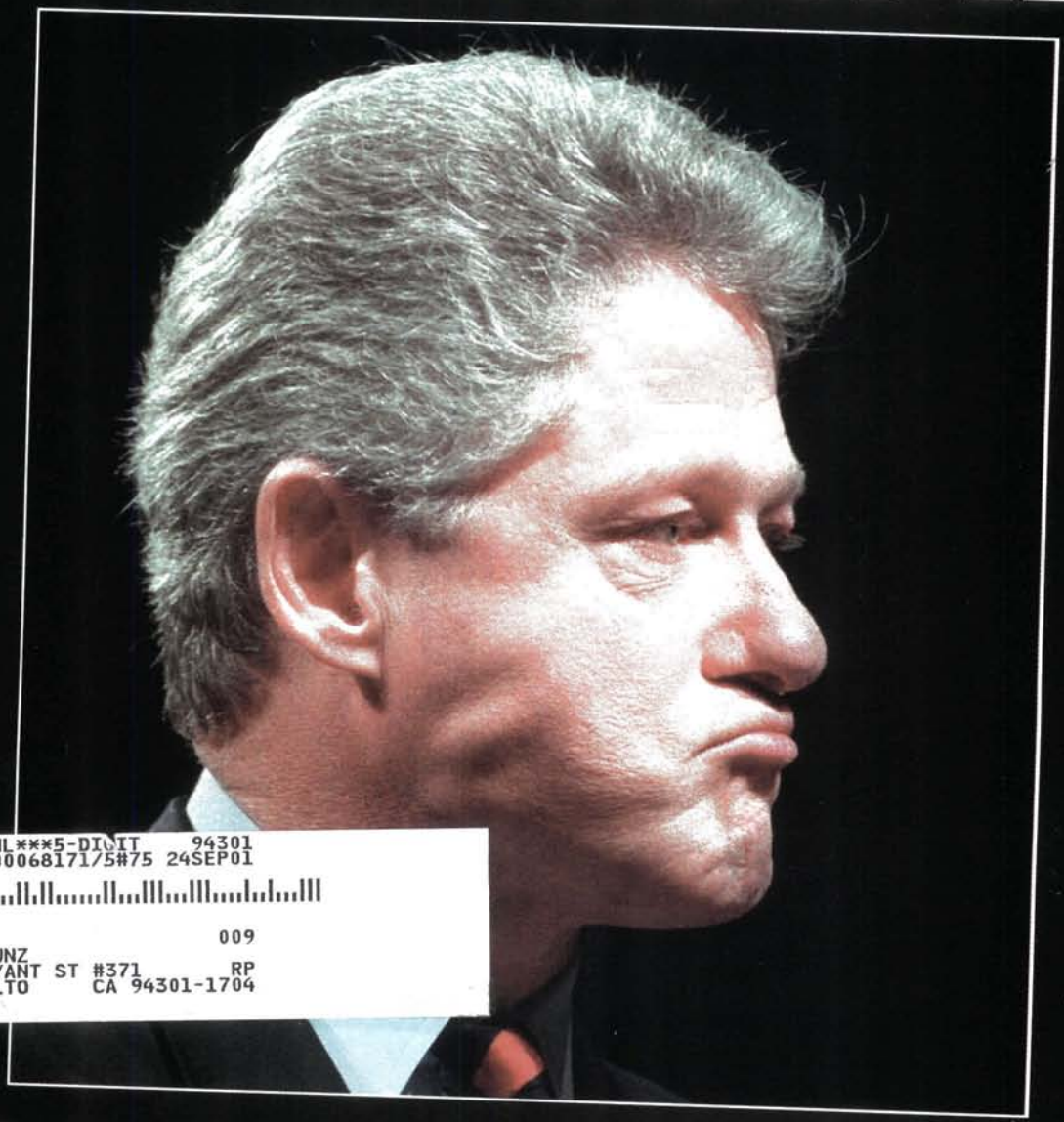

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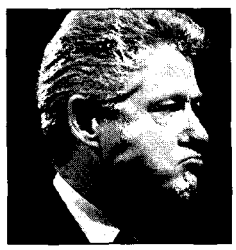

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CORRESPONDENCE

Hollywood Communists

To the editors:

As a friend of Paul Jarrico, the blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter and ex-Communist, I want to correct some errors in Michael Ybarra's mocking references to Jarrico's life and death ("Blacklist Whitewash," January 5 & 12).

True, Jarrico was an American Communist from his late teens until 1958. But does this make Jarrico personally responsible for the Moscow trials, the slaughter of kulaks, the Hitler-Stalin pact, and the gulags? For the record, Jarrico was a founding member of the Writers Guild of America who worked hard for New Deal and progressive causes. And he refused to rat on friends, comrades, and family when it was fashionable—and indeed mandatory—if you wanted to keep your movie job.

Ybarra notes that Jarrico did not leave the Communist Party until two years after "Khrushchev upended the communist world by revealing Stalin's crimes in his 1956 secret speech." In fact, Jarrico, along with hundreds of other traumatized (if late-blooming) Communists, stubbornly stayed in the party to democratize it—a fool's errand, as it turned out.

Paul Jarrico was a good, just, and honorable man. And he'd once been a Red. So damn what?

CLANCY SIGAL
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:

It's certainly true that some of Hollywood's best-known blacklisted writers remained Communists long after others were disenchanted by the party's rigid adherence to Soviet tyranny. But that hardly made them dangerous enemies of the state worthy of having their careers ruined. After all, writers have far less clout in Hollywood than they do in, say, Washington.

Would it really have been better if they had informed on their friends? Many of them had long since left the party by the time of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings, but they were still subject to career-killing reprisals by crazed Hollywood Red hunters. Ybarra doesn't offer any credible alternative to informing.

Ybarra also attributes to me the politically correct thinking that has led Hollywood to repeatedly shun director Elia Kazan for lifetime-achievement honors because of his long-ago cooperation with HUAC investigators. Had he read a piece I wrote for *The Los Angeles Times* several years ago, entitled "WHY HOLLYWOOD WON'T FORGIVE ELIA KAZAN," he would know that I exposed the hypocrisy of present-day Hollywood liberals who would deny Kazan his deserved honor as one of the great filmmakers of his time.

PATRICK GOLDSTEIN
Via the Internet

To the editors:

Michael Ybarra might have found it illuminating to look at the filmographies of those he purports to have been Communist menaces. Surely, the Hollywood Ten were selected for attack not for their minor pamphleteering efforts, but because of their perceived ability to

CELEBRATING THE HOLLYWOOD TEN
BILL LANN LEE ROUTS THE GOP—*PETER BEINART*
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
Andrew Sullivan, Bill Bennett's Offenses • Robert Dreyfuss: The CIA's Pretenses
Citizens and Strangers
Exclusion, Discrimination, and the Making of Americans
BY JEFFREY ROSEN

shape public opinion through their movies. Yet, he doesn't mention even one credit of the Ten or any other blacklisted filmmaker.

How, in such an oppressive ideological environment, did these writers continue to make such popular Hollywood fare? Isn't it unlikely that so many intelligent, principled people would live as hypocrites? Isn't it far more plausible that the Ten and others like them weren't the Soviet-brainwashed zealots Ybarra makes them out to be, but rather progressive thinkers looking to Marxism as a potential solution to the world's inequities?

These Hollywood Communists did not, according to Ybarra, "defend important constitutional rights" in spite of their "doctrinal contempt for bourgeois liberties." Instead, it was their devotion to freedom of speech, to enlightened humanism, that they expressed in their work and their actions before HUAC.

JEFFREY BLITZ
Los Angeles, California

Balancing Bill Lann Lee

To the editors:

Peter Beinart ("The Lee Rout," January 5 & 12) contends that the Republicans' refusal to confirm Bill Lann Lee to head the Justice Department's civil rights division is politically boneheaded because it will cost them support among Asian Americans. Let's assume that Beinart is correct. What would he have had the Senate do? Acquiesce in any appointment and cave in on any issue if it's politically expedient to do so?

In the past, THE NEW REPUBLIC has praised politicians who oppose the government's classification of people on the basis of skin color, even when that opposition might have cost them votes. The nine senators on the Senate Judiciary Committee who opposed Lee—a man who has made a career of stubbornly supporting such classifications—deserve praise, not a snide attack on their political acumen.

ROGER CLEGG
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

In his incredulity over Republican opposition to Bill Lann Lee, Peter Beinart misses the obvious explanation: it was the right thing to do.

Lee has assaulted California's Proposition 209 and color-blind college-admissions policies (which, of course, disproportionately benefit Asian Americans). To confirm him as the nation's top civil rights official would have required Republican senators to betray basic principles, ones shared by a majority of Americans.

Republicans rarely profit from playing "ethnic politics." George Bush signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991 only to see black support dwindle. Proposition 209 out-polled Bob Dole by two and one-half to one among blacks. Republicans can win minority votes by applying their principles to the needs of minorities, not by abandoning those principles.

CLINT BOLICK
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Peter Beinart argues that Republican opposition to Bill Lann Lee alienates Asian voters because they "see themselves as woefully underrepresented in the upper echelons of government—a symptom of a society that grants them private success but not public glory." Missing from his analysis, however, is the fact that society does so through the very racial preferences that Lee supports. Because Asians are disproportionately *academic* achievers, racial preferences force universities to enroll only

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those with the highest test scores. Thus, preferences deny opportunities to those Asians who are most likely to achieve political success—those with both sufficient intelligence to be admitted to elite schools on traditional criteria *and* the social skills obtained from spending Saturday nights partying rather than studying.

JAMES C. HO
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:

Usually the dastardly Republicans are trashed by TNR for their deafness to principle. Yet when they take a stand against Bill Lann Lee on principle, Peter Beinart gloats over their patent political obtuseness in alienating so many Asian Americans who are otherwise well-disposed to the GOP. While venturing no opinion at all on the merits of Lee's appointment to head the Justice Department's civil rights division, Beinart tells us that Republicans should have simply got behind it because it meant so much to Asian Americans—for apparently no better reason than that Lee is one of them.

It is just this sort of reasoning-by-the-genes that TNR normally gets on its high horse about. How is confirming Lee different from kowtowing to Jesse Jackson and other advocates of racial preference?

HAL RIEDL
Baltimore, Maryland

Alternatives for at-risk youth

To the editors:

Glenn C. Loury ("Welfare Pair," January 5 & 12) was on target when he cited James Q. Wilson's proposal for "more intensive pre-school education" for at-risk ghetto children. This is an indispensable component of any long-range welfare reform program, given the caregiving shortcomings of so many inner-city mothers. Still, it's not enough. To prevent the destructive effects of the street culture from canceling these early gains, we need after-school, weekend, and summer programs that combine recreation and education.

It would be costly, yes, but not as costly as the crime, drugs, and welfare costs that will result if this isn't done.

REO M. CHRISTENSON
West Carrollton, Ohio

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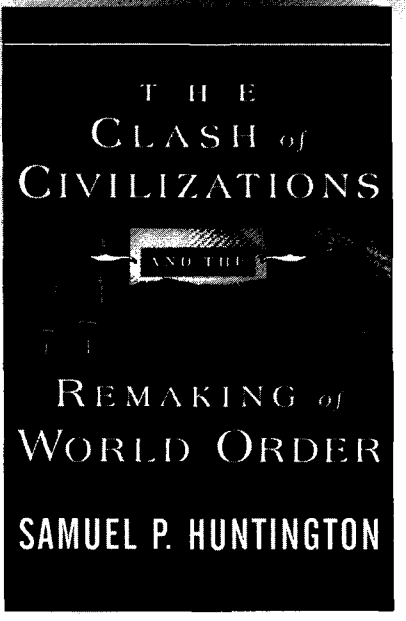

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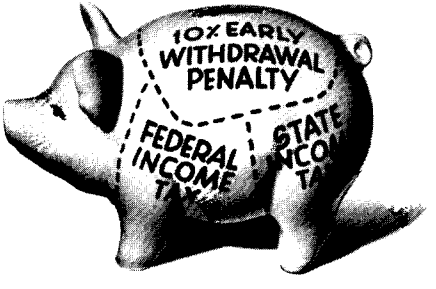

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FROM WASHINGTON

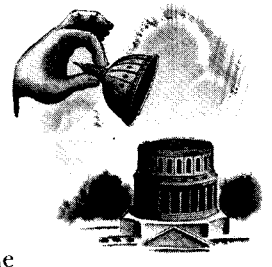
Starr chamber

People are asking how Monicagate compares with Watergate. Here's a thought: back then, a president was brought down for using scary police-state tactics—CIA cover-ups, wiretaps, secret tapes, black-bag jobs—in an effort to destroy his political enemies. This time, the roles are reversed: a president's political enemies are using scary police-state tactics to destroy *him*.

Consider the following from page 41 of the February 2 edition of *Newsweek*:

> FBI agents wired Linda Tripp with a secret listening device. Over lunch, while hidden tapes turned, Tripp walked her unwitting friend back through the whole story. *According to knowledgeable law-enforcement sources,* [my italics] Lewinsky made particularly damning statements about Vernon Jordan. "He said, 'It doesn't matter what anybody says, you just deny it,'" Lewinsky said. . . .

In other words: secret agents of the federal government orchestrated a conversation between two private citizens about incriminating aspects of their private affairs and the private affairs of other citizens. The agents eavesdropped on this meeting and tape-recorded it. Then, these secret agents, or the unelected prosecutors who supervised them, picked an especially "damning" portion of this set-up conversation and described it to the press—in circumstances calculated to maximize both the harm to these people's reputations and the pressure on them to capitulate in later criminal proceedings.



Talk about a scandal! The "law-enforcement sources" who leaked these tidbits were themselves violating at least the spirit of the laws which prohibit the publication of raw FBI material. Certainly, they were violating any notion of fairness toward Lewinsky or Jordan. To me, this one indecent act by sworn officers of the court suggests that Ken Starr's investigation did more violence to the really important values of our democracy than Bill Clinton's alleged dalliance with Monica Lewinsky ever could.

This is not a knock on *Newsweek*; reporters get their news where they can. But it's revealing that, in an article full of ostensibly self-critical commentary on the magazine's cooperative interactions with Starr's team, *Newsweek* never stops to consider that the means of leaking this particular scoop might be even more troubling than the contents of the scoop itself.

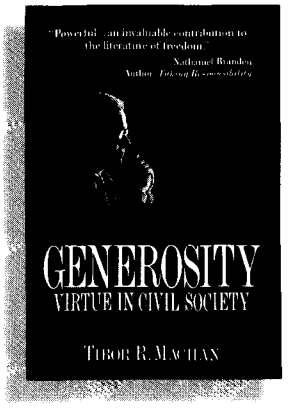
I've never been a particular fan of Clinton himself or of his administration. (Nor am I endorsing Hillary Clinton's bizarre "right-wing conspiracy" talk.) If the allegations about a pathologically reckless liaison with Lewinsky prove true, and if the president lied in a sworn deposition and to the American people, then I think the sheer tawdriness of it all might render him incapable, and hence unfit, to be president. He may have to resign—perhaps after some delegation of Lloyd Bentsens and Warren Christophers informs him that it's for the good of both the country and his party.

But if Clinton abdicates, how will we feel on the day after? I was barely in my teens when Nixon resigned, but I vividly recall the cathartic climate of August 1974. Not just a bad president, but a corrupt and undemocratic presidency, had been purged. We were relieved. There was closure. As Gerald Ford put it: "Our long national nightmare is over."

Will we feel the same way the day after Clinton resigns? I doubt it (assuming he resigns soon). A bad president will be gone, but not a bad presidency. And we'll still be stuck with the independent counsel law and all its potential for abuse. Meanwhile, where's the national nightmare? By all accounts, the country is in excellent shape, both economically and socially. On the very day that *The Washington Post* first reported the scandal, it also carried the results of a new poll showing that Clinton's approval rating was 60 percent and, more importantly, that public faith in government was growing. "[F]ar more people than ever say they are satisfied with the way government is working, and fewer people say they are angry," the *Post* reported.

Among other things, these data reflect a public consensus that there is simply no comparison between the transgressions of this White House,

continued on page 41



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

FEBRUARY 16, 1998

FAIR STRIKE

An investigator with extraordinary powers, demanding access to the very residence of the president, and charging that he is meeting with obstruction at the highest levels. A president, denying that he has anything to hide, and complaining of a conspiracy against him by old and determined enemies. Washington? No, Baghdad. The investigator is not Kenneth Starr, he is Richard Butler. The president is not Bill Clinton, he is Saddam Hussein. And what he is hiding is much more toxic than that girl from Beverly Hills.

It is not likely that Monica Lewinsky will spare Saddam Hussein another experience of American air power. (Consider such a sentence; savor it as a souvenir of the Clinton years.) Quite the contrary. Nothing is more in the interest of our libidinous president than to exercise his authority as commander-in-chief immediately. A fake war in Albania? Come on. This isn't a movie. We're talking a real war in Iraq. And a just war it will be, too. That the president is not exactly in an ideal position to make that case at the moment is a real problem, but it is not enough of a problem to discredit American action.

Alas, for this president, it is not a new problem. Historians may well decide that the chief lesson of the Clinton presidency is that a political leader need not be a moral leader. It is surely a distasteful proposition. Policies denote principles. In some circumstances it may be sufficient to think of the president of the United States as the chief executive officer of the United States, but certainly not when he is ordering American forces into battle. When American bombs fall on Baghdad, for example, they will destroy people as well as buildings and missiles. For that reason, the commander-in-chief, too, requires moral authority. But Bill Clinton will have forever entangled the American struggle against Iraq's genocidal tyrant with his own struggle for political survival. He will be correct to use force against Saddam Hussein, but he has forfeited the right to ask anyone to admire him for it.

Why will he be right? Because it is now clear beyond any doubt that Saddam Hussein has no intention of relinquishing his ability to manufacture and deploy weapons of mass destruction. (Remember, this is not an exercise in deterrence theory. This man has already used them.) The letter that Richard Butler of UNSCOM wrote to the Security Council on January 22 is a remarkable tale of Iraqi mendacity and obstruction. The deputy prime minister of Iraq announced to Butler that he expected the United Nations to close "the missile file" and "the chemical weapons file." Butler sharply retorted that there are outstanding problems about both of these files. As for biological weapons, he wrote, "Iraq's biological declaration was incomplete and not credible." (Talking to reporters the other day, the undauntable Butler expressed himself less diplomatically: the anthrax or botulin toxin in Saddam's possession, he said, was enough to "blow away Tel Aviv.")

It is a scandal that the United Nations and the United States should be wasting time with Tariq Aziz's lies. Butler to the Security Council:

> The talks were characterized, from the beginning, by: extended statements by the Iraqi side to which no even remotely equal reply was invited, accepted, or apparently wanted; moments of abuse and denigration of UNSCOM and its professional officers; an attempt literally to apportion all blame to UNSCOM, past and present, for the fact that the disarmament task had not been completed and sanctions on Iraq remained in force.... The deputy prime minister spoke at length about how Iraq had divested itself, long ago, of all its weapons of mass destruction, their components, and the means to produce them. He claimed that UNSCOM was about to declare this to be the case, in mid-1995, but this was stopped when a person whom he described as an "idiot," the late Lt. General Hussein Kamel, had defected from Iraq, leaving behind an extensive cache of documents on Iraq's prohibited weapons programmes, which came into the possession of the Commission in August 1995.

But wasting time—or buying it—is precisely the objective of all this Iraqi rubbish. The Iraqis are busy moving weapons and weapons technology out of UNSCOM's reach. (In one instance, U.N. inspectors watched from afar as Iraqis spirited some hard drives away.) So the United States has no choice but to emphasize with the use of military force the seriousness of its intention to make Saddam Hussein incapable of further atrocity.

But it is almost certain that Saddam Hussein will not pay heed. After all, he did not learn from the Gulf war, and he is coldly indifferent to the consequences of his military programs for his own people, who are suffering from the sanctions. So let us consider the aftermath of a

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bombing of Baghdad. Some of Saddam's capability will be destroyed, but certainly not all of it. (This is the most chilling sentence in Butler's letter: "Until 1995, Iraq denied any production of [the chemical agent] VX. After inquiries from UNSCOM, Iraq issued a declaration that it has produced only 260 litres of VX. Today we know that Iraq has produced at least 3.9 tons of VX.") France and Russia will be delighted by the chance to express solidarity with America's victim and to agitate for the end of sanctions and to return with their spreadsheets to Iraq. And Saddam will simply pick up the pieces, get the laboratories and the factories running again, and send Tariq Aziz back out to fence with Richard Butler.

The bombing of Baghdad, in short, is not the solution to the problem of Saddam and his chemical agents. There is only one solution to that problem, and that is to depose or to destroy Saddam himself. Bill Clinton seems no more willing to acknowledge this truth than Colin Powell was in 1991, when that great American paragon left the Iraqi villain to fight another day. But who knows? The great American nonparagon in the White House is, as he loves to remind us, still a work in progress. •

NOTEBOOK

SCHOOL'S OUT: President Clinton made some good proposals in his State of the Union address, and so it is more out of bemusement than outrage that we draw attention to one of its salient absurdities. For some time now, Clinton has been recasting spending initiatives as tax cuts. The conceit here is that giving somebody, say, $500 for child care expands government, while giving a $500 tax cut shrinks government. This metaphysical nuance, while inscrutable to outside analysts, apparently matters enough to congressional Republicans to make Clinton's domestic programs palatable. And so, by way of complying with this distinction, Clinton proposed during the State of the Union to enact "a school-construction tax cut." The idea sounds worthy, yet strange—local school boards do not pay federal taxes. So we did some checking. (The White House returned our non-Monica-related phone call with lightning speed.) Here's how the plan works: local governments will raise money for school repair by issuing bonds. The bonds, however, will not pay interest. The incentive to buy and hold them is, instead, a federal tax break. This tax break will be calculated by the Treasury Department to be equivalent to the interest such municipal bonds periodically yield. For sure, it would have been far simpler to issue normal interest-paying bonds, subsidized by Washington. But that would be spending! And the era of big government, you see, is over.

CREDIT CRUNCH: Everyone has been scrutinizing the president's body language for the slightest sign he might be bending the truth about Monica Lewinsky. But what about the half-truth he told at the State of the Union about the origins of the budget surplus? He credited the disappearance of the budget deficit to two acts: "the courageous vote in 1993" and "the historic, bipartisan balanced budget agreement" of 1997. He got the first part right; the '93 deal obliged Congress both to raise revenues and to accept serious spending cuts. But the '97 budget deal had nothing to do with the current bounty. The deficit-reduction measures in that bill haven't even taken effect yet. (In fact, it was projected to temporarily *increase* the deficit in its first year.) If Clinton wanted to share the credit with Republicans, he could have touted the 1990 budget deal, brokered by George Bush at the price of his "no new taxes" pledge, which reduced the deficit even more than the 1993 agreement. Of course, doing so would have left out a certain sitting president.

PRIME MINISTER: As Jeffrey Rosen points out elsewhere in these pages ("The End of Privacy," p. 21), one perverse result of recent federal court decisions is to restrict the range of people the president may consult in crises such as the current one. As the law now stands, anyone who talks to Clinton about Monica Lewinsky risks being hit with a subpoena (and a mountain of legal bills) unless that individual enjoys some formal privilege, such as those that protect conversations between a husband and his wife, or between a lawyer and his client. Thus, Clinton's political advisers are out of the loop, while his lawyer-wife commands the White House counterattack. But how did the Rev. Jesse Jackson work his way into the inner circle, emerging on "Larry King Live" as an unequivocal Clinton defender? Well, Jackson enjoys a privilege, too: he's a minister, and you can't subpoena a conversation between a pastor and a member of his flock. So it turns out that his visit to the White House on Super Sunday was a religious mission to raise the first family's spirits. "I was there not as a political legal strategist-tactician," Jackson went out of his way to tell King, "but as a friend and as a minister.... We did have prayer." It was also through Jackson that the Clintons subtly reminded the public of how cruel this ordeal has been to their daughter. "That which touched me most was my conversations with Chelsea," Jackson reported, going on to describe what a source of strength she and her father and mother are to one another in these troubled times. This little speech was a big political favor for the president, and you can be sure that, if Clinton survives, Jackson will expect to be repaid in equal measure—yet another reason to regret the tawdry spectacle that has enveloped the administration.

WITH DEFENDERS LIKE THIS...: "Nobody understands that women can feel relieved sometimes when their husband is fucking someone else. It's hard to satisfy men with big egos. But there's no way that Hillary could come out and say, 'I don't care that Bill is fuck-

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ing someone else. Sex is not the way we prove our commitment.' In terms of their relationship, they are the most progressive couple we've ever had in the White House. People want to make them pay for that. It would be the most positive thing for our culture if we respected the love between Hillary and her man. We need a love ethic at the seat of power. And these two people do seem to deeply care about one another. So in that way they are better role models than any previous couple in the White House. Their relationship is based on respect and love. Not necessarily on sex. People hate that."—bell hooks, in the online magazine *Salon*.

WITH DEFENDERS LIKE THIS, CONTINUED: "There are a thousand things, not including oral sex, which could have gone on, which fall well short of adultery.... Let's assume that some of the allegations that Hillary sometimes—not necessarily being into regular sex with men—might be true. Let's assume that this is a guy who has been sexually active for a long time, and then got it that as president... he'd have to shut himself down. You would then expect a variety of things which would be quasi-sexual in nature but which would fall short of it.... Phone sex might be one of them, fantasies might be one of them.... Those all could be real things without actually committing adultery."—Dick Morris, on KABC radio in Los Angeles.

DON'T ASK, DON'T E-MAIL: What was Senior Chief Petty Officer Timothy R. McVeigh (no relation to the Oklahoma City bomber) thinking when he apparently sent an America Online computer message under the screen name "boysrch" to a military colleague? Word got back to Navy administrators, who looked up the user's profile on AOL's public screen-profile menu and reported that they found that the person behind "boysrch" had indeed entered "gay" under his marital status. Approached by Navy investigators, AOL disclosed the real name behind "boysrch"—a clear violation of the company's subscriber confidentiality policy. AOL has apologized. But that won't help McVeigh, who, though currently under the protection of a court-ordered temporary injunction, could face discharge three years before he can qualify for a pension. As a result, McVeigh is pursuing action against the Navy for violating the Electronic Communications Privacy Act. There's also the unsettled question of whether McVeigh's online correspondence, in which he never disclosed his full name, really did violate the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. But one thing is clear: the military continues to resolve every ambiguity in its murky policy to the disadvantage of its suspected gay servicemembers, even if that means pursuing them into the far reaches of cyberspace.

BAD WILL HUNTING: The editors of TNR wish to announce a new contest: Who can come up with the best name for the current Washington *scandale*? We'll accept nominations that employ the "–gate" suffix—like you, we've already heard Fornigate, Zippergate, Monicagate, and Starrgate. But we encourage contestants to think outside that particular box. Our 1987 contest winner avoided the "Contragate" temptation and produced the sobriquet "Iranamok" to describe the arms-for-hostages scandal that crippled Ronald Reagan—but which has nevertheless been recorded in history as "the Iran-Contra affair." This year's winner could make history and will receive a free one-year subscription to TNR. •

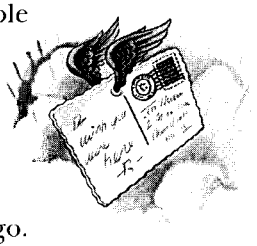
SUNDANCE POSTCARD

MOGUL HORDES

By Florence Williams

Bruce McGowan is having a bad day. The phone won't stop ringing, and packs of late-lunchers keep storming past the "closed" sign on the door to the trendy Park City, Utah, Riverhorse Cafe, where McGowan works as a reservations clerk. To top it all off, thanks to a new town policy, McGowan now has to pay for his parking spot. He's not usually this grumpy. Then again, it's not usually the week of the Sundance Film Festival.

Over 16,000 New Yorkers and Angelenos have descended on Park City, saturating this tiny mountain town with traffic jams, black apparel, and urban attitude. "Last night I told this woman not to sit on the dinner table, and she actually said, 'Fuck you,' right to my face," says McGowan, shaking his head. "People are networking, and they want everything to go right, so they're a little pushier," explains Anush Yousefian, a 23-year-old hostess at Mercato Mediterraneo, where Miramax mogul Harvey Weinstein infamously shouted down a sales rep over the rights to *Shine* a couple of years ago. "They don't understand that we're not used to that."



The locals aren't the only ones adjusting to foreign elements. The movie crowd seems oddly ill-prepared for Park City's icy streets. Skinny blondes in tiny skirts and platform heels death-grip their companions as they totter from screening to party. Nearly everyone, male and female alike, sports an unlined leather jacket. And in place of earmuffs the cinemati cover their frost-bitten ears with sleek cell phones.

Sundance didn't used to be like this. What was once a relatively manageable, if grungy, gathering of indie addicts has grown by 60 percent in the last year alone.

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Today, the festival is one of Hollywood's hottest commercial marketplaces, generating what festival founder Robert Redford has compared to a wild trading frenzy on the floor of the stock exchange, as distributors compete to sign up the next big independent release. "It's gotten to be a monster," Redford concedes of the festival. "A good monster, but there it is."

And the monster has spawned a litter: in addition to Sundance, locals must now contend with Slamdance (the concurrent guerrilla festival started by Sundance rejects and now booming in its own right), Slamdunk (the guerrilla guerrilla festival), Slumdance (started by high-school students in a local basement), and Spamdance (the local cable station's competition for home movies). Rumor has it there's also Sleazedance, a porn film competition, but no one seems to know where it is.

Park City's ski-resort owners would normally welcome such a large influx of potential customers, but they've discovered that Sundance folks are a different breed. The movie execs are too busy wheeling and dealing to hit the slopes. As for the twentysomething mogul wannabes, they have maxed out their credit cards to finance their films and can barely afford plane tickets, let alone lift tickets.

Still, for many Park City businesses, Sundance translates into big bucks. The festival generates an estimated $16 million for the town, making it well worth the trouble. "I've already hit the wall," explains bartender John Harden just four days into the festival, "but this is how I pay for my summer vacation."

The success of Sundance has prompted Park City to venture into new territory. "We've also hosted gay week, black skier week, all sorts of things," says Jeff Smith, a local Mormon bishop. "We want people to see us as reasonably open." But none of these events will test the city like what's coming up in 2002: the Winter Olympics. Park City will host more than a third of the events, including the giant-slalom, bobsled, and luge competitions.

Accommodating what city officials estimate will be up to 60,000 spectators per day in a town of 6,000 is a tall order. But if Sundance is any indication, Park City has gotten the event shtick down to a science. "Last year the town came to us and said, 'How can we help you?'" says Geoffrey Gilmore, Sundance's director of programming. "So this year things are running much more smoothly." The festival now offers greatly improved public transportation, well-managed crowd control, and a new 1,300 seat auditorium for popular screenings.

And, despite their grumblings about long lines at the supermarket and tight parking, Park City locals are learning to live with the burdens of becoming a glamour town. Bishop Smith maintains that while "I personally avoid the offensive films, and I don't participate in the drinking and partying, I don't mind Sundance."

In any event, the line between local and exotic increasingly is being blurred. At the oyster bar at 350 Main, I sit squeezed between a bearded New Jerseyite who works for the Sundance Channel and a bearded Park City native slouched over a frosty mug. After chatting up the New Jersey man I turn to the local. "What do you do in town?"

He eyes me warily, responding, "I'm a butler."

"A butler?" I ask, struggling to picture him in a tuxedo and white gloves.

"Yeah, I work for Jeffrey Katzenberg. He has a house here."

The guy from New Jersey glances over. "You work for Katzenberg? Cool."

FLORENCE WILLIAMS is a writer in western Montana.

JOHANNESBURG DISPATCH

BLACK MARKETS

By Peter Beinart

For most of this decade, Stephen Biko's ghost has been an unwelcome presence at South Africa's freedom celebrations. The African National Congress has excluded the murdered black-consciousness leader from its annals of revolutionary hagiography—his name is not even mentioned in Nelson Mandela's 751-page autobiography *Long Walk To Freedom.* It's not hard to figure out why. Biko, who argued against white participation in the anti-apartheid struggle, contradicts the ANC's sacred liberation narrative, which holds that the movement always dreamed—King-style—of a nonracial future. In reality, not only did the ANC face persistent criticism from black nationalists like Biko, but it wasn't always so sure of its own multiracialism. Mandela himself spent his early years in the ANC Youth League arguing that it should be a black-only organization. He had accepted multiracialism by the mid-1950s, but on the eve of his imprisonment several years later, the future president was again having second thoughts, fearing that the ANC's alliance with white and Indian anti-apartheid organizations was damaging its legitimacy.

In many ways, the ANC's color-blindness was a by-product of the cold war. The National Party, which took power in 1948, reacted hysterically to Soviet forays into the Third World, and, partly in an effort to win Western support, declared virtually all anti-apartheid activity to be Communist. The 1950 Suppression of Communism Act defined a Communist as one who "aimed at bringing about any political, social, or economic change in the country by unlawful acts." The unintended result was to give real Communists—many of them white and Indian—newfound prestige, a prestige that white liberals, who generally remained within the law, never achieved. And this prestige made Communists politi-

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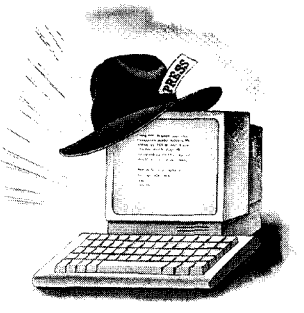
cally tenable allies for the ANC. Starting in the 1950s, and for the three subsequent decades, the South African Communist Party (SACP) represented the chief route for non-blacks into the ANC. SACP helped move the ANC away from African traditionalism and toward Marxism—for while whites and Indians could never fully participate in a movement premised on nostalgia for precolonial African monarchy, they could be equals in their hostility to the capitalist means of production.

So it is not surprising that the ANC's black rivals contested its multiracialism and its communism in the same breath. The Pan Africanist Congress, formed in the late 1950s in response to the ANC's decision to ally with whites, Indians, and Coloureds, rejected communism as a European ideology and was thus bizarrely hailed by the U.S. State Department. In the 1960s and 1970s, Biko's Black Consciousness Movement inherited the PAC's ideological mantle: anti-white and anti-Communist. For the ANC, whose army was led through the late 1980s by a Yiddish-speaking Marxist, Biko's legacy was threatening indeed. And so throughout the negotiations following Mandela's release, and for the first years of the ANC government that followed, the arbiters of revolutionary favor sentenced the ghost of Stephen Biko to ideological banishment.



But now they are trying to raise it. In the past several months, the ANC has begun an ideological transformation toward Biko-style black nationalism, a turn signaled most dramatically by Nelson Mandela's fiery, anti-white speech in December at the ANC conference in Mafikeng. This shift is already prompting howls of fear and disapproval from white liberals in South Africa and the West. But that fear is misplaced. The ANC's growing Africanism is the flip side of its remarkable embrace of the free market. It is best understood not as a move to the left, but to the right—part of a broader turn toward market authoritarianism in black politics that is visible in phenomena as seemingly unrelated as the rise of IMF-approved autocrats like Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and in Louis Farrakhan's support of black entrepreneurship.

It's no coincidence that F.W. de Klerk freed Nelson Mandela within six months of the revolution in Eastern Europe. White South African leaders had been trying for years to end the domestic violence and international isolationism that engulfed their country. But as long as the ANC seemed bent on confiscating white wealth, men like de Klerk's predecessor, P.W. Botha, deemed the price of majority rule too high. Then, in February 1990, de Klerk saw the world that was about to emerge. With the cold war over, white South Africa could afford to let the ANC win an election. After all, without a Soviet Union to fund its socialist schemes, the ANC would be forced to emasculate itself once in office. Journalist Geoffrey Wheatcroft compared the ANC to "an ardent Jesuit missionary about to convert some far-flung country" who had just "heard that the Pope had declared himself an atheist and closed down the Catholic Church."

As de Klerk predicted, the newly elected ANC found itself sandwiched between the white civil service that would implement its economic policy and the Western governments and international lending institutions that would fund it. White business understood the game right away. Nineteen of the country's richest CEOs each gave the ANC one million rand for its 1994 election campaign, and Anglo-American, South Africa's mineral colossus, put former ANC chief negotiator Cyril Ramaphosa on its board. The impact on ANC economic policy has been nothing short of spectacular. Instead of nationalizing South African industry, the ANC is privatizing it. As political scientists Heribert Adam, Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, and Kogila Moodley explain in their book *Comrades in Business*, the ANC's economic policy has leap-frogged social democracy, going straight from socialist to "Thatcherite."

Impoverished black South Africans accepted the about-face because the ANC was led by Mandela, the secular saint, and because it had brought them freedom. And, for the first three years after the 1994 election, every time the ANC worried that it was losing black popular support, it used Mandela to milk the emotional power of the political liberation with which he was synonymous.

But in 1999, Mandela will retire. His probable successor will be Thabo Mbeki, an urbane, politically ruthless technocrat who is uninspiring to the ANC rank and file. Mbeki needs a way to keep black-voter loyalty as the thrill of liberation fades. But he is probably the ANC leader most familiar with the stern realities of today's neoliberal world economic order, and he is also the prime mover behind the ANC's resolutely capitalist macroeconomic program. In short, he knows he cannot bond with the masses by grabbing white wealth; the economic cost to the country would be too high. And this leaves him open to a challenge from a charismatic populist like Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

But Mbeki understands something about black South African ideology that many commentators do not: capitalism can go hand-in-hand with racialism. Knowing he cannot redistribute wealth, his emerging strategy is to paint his leftist opponents as multiracialists—a familiar tactic in black South African politics—while allying himself with African traditionalism. That will allow him to placate both the international markets and his resentful constituents. To preserve the ANC's dominance in a radically different era, he will try to turn it into the opposite of what it has been for most of the past half-century. He will place Biko's ghost at the head of the table.

Some particulars of the Mbeki strategy have already come to light. He recently wrote the preface to a controversial memoir by William Makgoba, a former deputy vice chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand. Makgoba, before resigning from South Africa's most prestigious university, fought a pitched battle against white professors and administrators whom he accused of resisting the school's Africaniza-

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tion, and Mbeki's introduction was a clear move to associate himself with Makgoba's martyred Africanism. Many also see Mbeki's hand in a call last September by Peter Mokaba, former head of the ANC Youth League, for the ANC to sever its four-decade alliance with SACP. Saying that SACP has too much power within the ANC is a bit like Pat Buchanan saying that Goldman Sachs wields too much influence within the Clinton administration—it's a statement as much about ethnicity as about economics.

Perhaps most intriguing are the rumors that the ANC is seeking an alliance with its old foe, Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party. During the 1980s, American conservatives ceaselessly promoted Inkatha as the free-market alternative to the ANC. Had the folks at *National Review* understood the real reason for Buthelezi's anti-communism, they might have praised him a bit less. Buthelezi was anti-Communist for the same reason Stephen Biko was anti-Communist: because he associated communism with white domination. (American conservatives got a similar shock recently when they discovered that rebel leader Jonas Savimbi, their longtime hero, had stopped attacking the Angolan government for being Communist and started attacking it for being multiracial—which to him may have meant roughly the same thing.)

Buthelezi saw the ANC as populated by detribalized, Europeanized, urban blacks, while his base has always consisted of the poorer, more rural, more traditional segments of the Zulu people. The overtures toward Inkatha are evidence that Mbeki wants to shore up the ANC's Africanist credentials. Don't be surprised if he follows up by distancing himself from the ANC's liberal positions on the death penalty, abortion, and gay rights—positions opposed by traditionalists like Buthelezi—while implying that such liberal stances represent European, rather than African, values.

For some white South Africans, all this anti-whitism is proof that the ANC is slouching toward Harare, where Robert Mugabe, the thuggish Zimbabwean president, is trying forcibly to expropriate vast tracts of white farmland. But the evidence so far suggests that Mbeki's Africanism represents a fig leaf for, rather than a move away from, the ANC's pro-growth, free-market economic policies. In a recent interview with a South African business daily, *The Star*, Mbeki sounded as fiscally conservative as ever, rejecting the notion that "change must come solely from government initiatives." Mandela's speech last month, which many saw as an effort to invest Mbekism with his authority, lacerated the white media, the civil service, white opposition parties, and foreign-funded nongovernmental organizations. But left unscathed was South African business, a far more powerful force against wealth redistribution than any of those targeted by Mandela.

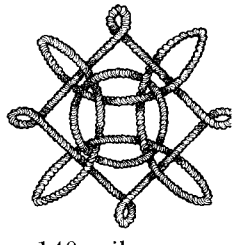
Undoubtedly, Mandela's speech heralds rising ANC intolerance of dissent, and this will likely continue with Mbeki because he will often need to use coercion to achieve the authority that Mandela enjoys as the result of prestige. But might one not be a tad skeptical when white South Africans claim that they cannot abide any infringement of their sacred civil liberties? After all, they lived quite happily under apartheid governments that repressed basic freedoms far more than Mbeki ever could. What the cynical Mbeki understands—and whites as of yet do not—is that it is precisely so that their BMWs do not get attacked that a post-Mandela government will infringe upon the culture of liberal democracy. Considering the other paths that the post-apartheid ANC could have taken, the Mbeki strategy, whatever its moral deficiencies, is one for which whites should thank their lucky stars. Or, more precisely, they should thank the ghost of Stephen Biko. •

THE HARD QUESTIONS

OFF TRACK

By Nathan Glazer

South Korea may be in financial ruin, but there is still at least one area in which it beats the United States: large public-works programs. As the *International Herald Tribune* recently reported, South Korea is building a high-speed passenger rail line that would make a 260-mile run from Seoul to Pusan in less than two hours. While the economic crisis has delayed—and possibly scuttled—the project, the very fact that it has been under construction is startling. In the United States, Amtrak trains take five hours to cover the considerably shorter distance from Boston to New York. Even with planned improvements that will allow tilting trains to take curves at higher speeds, the trip will still take more than three hours.



And the South Koreans are not the only ones putting U.S. transportation infrastructure to shame. Japan opened a high-speed rail system between Tokyo and Osaka, on new, dedicated tracks, way back in 1964. It ran at 140 miles per hour, which is considerably faster than the Metroliner—Amtrak's swiftest train—runs today. France opened the TGV between Paris and Lyons in 1982: it now glides along mostly new track at speeds reaching 170 miles per hour, linking Paris with Marseilles, Bordeaux, Lille, and Brussels. Even Italy has its own high-speed rail line, which provides swift nonstop service between Florence and Rome, along entirely new tracks.

To be sure, most Americans are happy to take their cars for trips between cities—and many find it more convenient to do so. For the rest, there are airlines. And our most sophisticated academic experts on transportation

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NPG Statement on Population

We Believe that the Optimum Rate of Population Growth is Negative

We believe that the optimum rate of population growth for the United States (and for the world) is negative until such time as the scale of economic activity, and its environmental effects, are reduced to a level that would be sustainable indefinitely.

We are convinced that if present rates of population growth and economic growth are allowed to continue, the end result, within the lifetimes of many of us, would inevitably be near universal poverty in a hopelessly polluted nation and world.

We agree with Professor Herman Daly who has pointed out that the human economy is a subset of the biosphere, and that the **current scale of economic activity relative to the biosphere is already far too large to be sustainable indefinitely.**

Stabilization Is Not Enough

We believe that calls for merely slowing down rapid population growth, or for stabilizing population at present or even higher levels, **are totally inadequate.**

Such proposals, while presented as a solution, **fail to address the central issue:** how to create a national (and world) economy that will be sustainable indefinitely.

At present or at even higher levels of population, neither the application of science and technology, nor simplifying life-styles, nor any combination of the two, can offer any hope of reducing our impact on the environment to a sustainable level.

We Need a Smaller Population

We recognize that our impact on the environment in terms of pollution and resource depletion is the product of our numbers times our per capita consumption of energy and materials. Thus, there are only three ways by which that impact can be reduced:

- By reducing the size of our population by a negative rate of population growth.
- By reducing over consumption (in the United States and other developed countries) by simplifying life-styles.
- By reducing resource depletion and pollution per unit of consumption through more efficient use of energy and materials.

Population size is by far the most critical of those three variables. **Nevertheless, our present scale of economic activity is so large relative to the biosphere, that all three measures are needed in order to reduce it to a sustainable level.**

An Urgent Need

Over 20 years ago, when our U.S. population was far smaller, (about 202 million, rather than our present 269 million), Professor John Holdren correctly saw the urgent need for a negative rate of population growth. At that time he wrote,

"...What is surprising... is that there is not more agreement concerning what the rate of change of population size should be. For given the uncertain, but possibly grave, risks associated with substantially increasing our impact on the environment, and given that population growth aggravates or impedes the solution of a wide variety of other problems... it should be obvious that the optimum rate of population growth is zero or negative until such time as the uncertainties have been removed and the problems solved."

A Population Goal for Our Country

We must have, first of all, a nationally-determined population goal for our country, accompanied by effective policies to achieve it.

We urge Congress and President Clinton to set, as a top priority national goal, **the achievement of a negative rate of population growth for the United States until such a time as the scale of our economic activity is reduced to a sustainable level.**

We also call on our political leaders to urge other nations to pursue a similar goal.

NPG is a nonprofit, national membership organization established in 1972. Contributions to NPG are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows.

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have for decades assured us that investing in fixed rail systems is not cost-effective. But there are still reasons to worry. Analyses that show rail investment to be wasteful are not entirely reliable, since they don't take into account such factors as the value of time spent not driving (and of having the time to, say, read instead). More importantly, though, the failure to keep up U.S. railways suggests our political system can no longer even envisage such major projects anymore, let alone complete them.

Even when the United States is willing to spend serious cash, its ambition is relatively limited. Compare, for example, the biggest project now underway in the United States, the "Big Dig," to the Korean train project—both of which will roughly cost $11 million. The Big Dig, or the Central Artery Project, is a massive program to take an elevated stretch of Interstate 93 in Boston and bury it underground. In contrast, for about the same money, South Korea is getting a high-speed system connecting three of its biggest cities, while the United States is getting a few miles of tunnel in Boston.

In the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration appropriated the first few hundred million dollars for the improvement of rail service between Washington and Boston. With our largest metropolitan center, New York, at the midpoint, this corridor certainly had—and still has—the density of population to make high-speed rail a sensible option. (Even in Europe and Japan, only those high-speed trains that run between major centers make money. The rest survive on government subsidies.) Yet while we have continued to spend a few hundred million dollars a year—probably more than the Japanese expended on their Shinkansen line from Tokyo to Osaka—we have very little to show for it. Among other foolish decisions, Washington's grand Union Station was turned into an unused visitor center and then turned back into a railway station, at a cost of many millions of dollars.

Today, we are frittering away many millions more on improving, ever so marginally, the stretch between Boston and New York. When completed, the changes will still leave Amtrak trains chugging along at half the speed of their Japanese counterparts—from 35 years ago. One of the problems is that the line uses bridges close to the Connecticut shore. Even a modest increase in speed and frequency of service would cause problems for shipping traffic along the edge of Long Island Sound. Amtrak also must deal with the private freight companies that run on the same tracks in our confused and complex rail system. The solution seems obvious enough: build a new, dedicated line further inland, over less densely populated tracts of land. This is exactly what the South Koreans, the Japanese, the Italians, and everyone else has done. But with all the overlapping and conflicting authorities among so many quasi-private and quasi-public agencies, rail policy has become a morass.

Indeed, it is precisely such a division of responsibility and accountability that has hampered attempts to connect New York's airports with its subway system. It is, again, a much needed improvement that would spare passengers and airport workers the torment of crowded bridges and freeways. But with no clear central authority to oversee improvements, the weirdest proposals—rather than the simplest and most direct ones—get considered. Now a project is finally underway. A light rail system will connect Kennedy Airport, not with Manhattan, but with Jamaica, in the middle of Queens.

Building better transportation systems is not hard. People all over the world have been doing it for 40 years. But thanks to the political realities of the United States, what is possible for every advanced nation is beyond our grasp and imagination. •

ON THE HILL

IRONIC TRIANGLE

By David Grann

"Is this on or off the record?" the Democratic congressman asks, sighing into the phone.

"On," I tentatively suggest.

"Well, I think it is still too early to jump to any conclusions. Bill Clinton is still the president of the United States and deserves the presumption of—"

"Okay," I interrupt, "background."

"If Clinton did perjure himself, then I think we need to impeach him as quickly as possible and get the whole thing over with. The last thing Democrats should do is what Republicans did during Watergate: defend the president until we all go down with him."

President William Jefferson Clinton may or may not have had an affair with a 21-year-old White House intern, and he may or may not have tried to cover it up. But if he did, then he is in trouble, and not just from a conspiracy of jilted lovers, rogue prosecutors, and partisan Republicans. While Democrats publicly embraced Clinton during the State of the Union, a growing band of them now say privately that they are prepared to do to Clinton what he once did to them: "triangulate," or even sacrifice, an ally in order to save a party. "If he's innocent, then we will rally behind him," says a Democratic senator. "But if he's guilty, then we have little choice but to try to end this thing before we get slaughtered in the next election."

Of course, many Republicans have come to the same conclusion: support for a doomed president would devastate Democrats at the polls. Which is why, in a perverse plot twist, some of the president's most vocal critics are among those putting the brakes on impeachment talk, at least for now. "The first people in the White House telling him it's time to leave won't be Republicans," says GOP Congressman Ray LaHood of Illinois. "It will be Democrats, because it's their hides

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that are at stake.... All Republicans have to do is sit back and let the fire burn." Or, as P.J. O'Rourke gleefully put it in the conservative *Weekly Standard*: the GOP should roast "the greased pig ... very slowly."

Already, three high-profile Democrats have tried to douse the fire before it consumes them. While the White House has refused to deal in hypotheticals, New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, California Congressman Henry Waxman, and Clinton's former Chief of Staff Leon Panetta (a probable candidate for governor in his home state of California) all suggested this week that, if the allegations prove true, it may be best for Clinton to step aside. And according to more than a dozen congressmen, senators, and pollsters I interviewed over the last four days, Democratic support for Clinton—while still strong in pockets—hinges on two big ifs: if he is exonerated, and if the public seems genuinely willing to forgive him.

One reason for this hedging is history: in 1974, sticking with Nixon cost Republicans a quarter of their House seats plus four more in the Senate. The other reason is the legacy of Clintonism. "He showed us everything we need to know about triangulation," says a liberal leadership aide, recalling Clinton's 1996 strategy of distancing himself from congressional Democrats. According to this rococo logic, Democrats can salvage their party before the 1998 election only by severing the man who, two years ago, salvaged the party by severing them. Indeed, some Democrats believe if they quickly dispatch a group of party elders to convince Clinton to resign, they can ensconce Al Gore in the White House for the next seven years. "This is the strange kind of thinking I'm hearing from Democrats on the Hill," says University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato.

So this is the end game of the politics of betrayal. And it helps explain why, in a closed-door meeting just hours before the State of the Union, Minority Leader Dick Gephardt was eagerly rallying Democrats to support the president for the first time in months. "If Gore becomes president now," concedes one Democratic leadership aide, "then Gephardt's 2000 presidential bid is dead in the water." This also helps explain why Gephardt may find the most support for his improbable crusade to save the president among Clinton's enemies across the aisle. "A lot of [GOP] members have told me privately that getting Gore in the White House would be devastating [to us politically]," says House Republican Whip Tom DeLay. In an informal TNR survey of 111 GOP House representatives, only 21 were willing to say that, if the allegations were true, they would definitely favor impeachment. Even DeLay, who only a few months ago screamed about impeaching Clinton's federal judges, has been circumspect. "A lot of my colleagues think it's better to keep Clinton around," says GOP Representative Mark Souder of Indiana.

To be sure, such thinking is by no means unanimous in the GOP. Breaking from the camp of slow-roasters is a small but vocal camp of Southern deep fryers led by Georgia Congressman Bob Barr. Months before anyone had heard of Monica Lewinsky, Barr was unfurling a resolution on the House floor calling for impeachment proceedings. Pre-Zippergate, he had 18 cosponsors, including Souder; so far, the new scandal has netted him only one more. But "there have been a lot more members calling, wanting to sign on," Barr boasted after the State of the Union. And if Starr unearths more devastating material, many more will surely materialize.

But for now, at least, the deep fryers remain a minority: "I thank God," says LaHood, "that most Republicans are not given to the wild, crazy notions of the Bob Barrs of the world." In other words, when all the triangulating is done, Clinton could be left standing. And, even more remarkably, Clintonism could be, too. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE OCTOPUS

By Hanna Rosin

You're straining to see over the heads of about a million reporters seeding the White House lawn, but you're not sure what there is to see. There is a limo parked right up to the curb, and you imagine maybe Monica will step out in her trench coat, like she did last night on TV. Instead, the door to the Roosevelt Room swings open, and Senator Dianne Feinstein steps out. (Or is that Barbara Boxer?) The press octopus makes a lunge for her, but the tiny figure

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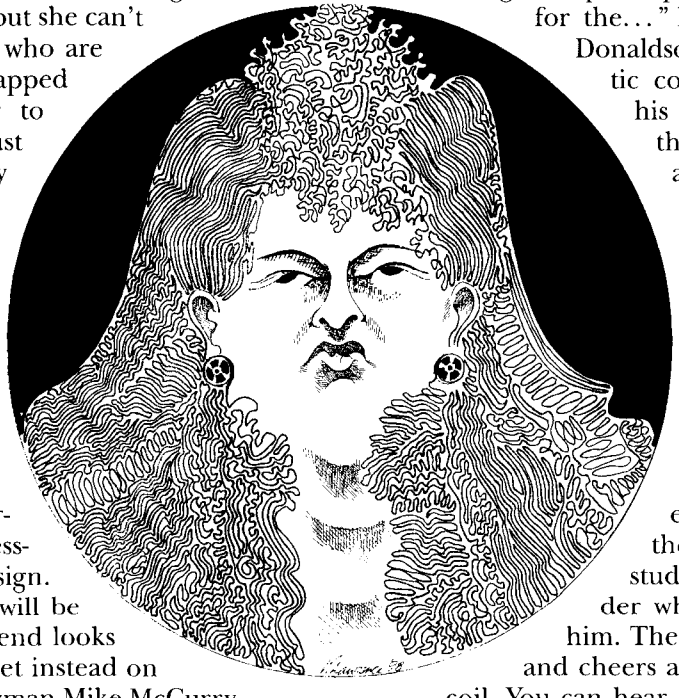
in lavender merely smiles, chirps "See ya later," and disappears into the shiny car. It's cold, and you wish you were home watching Monica on TV.

A sudden commotion crashes behind you as another octopus rumbles towards the press room—this one in pursuit of one of its own, the recently unshackled Sam Donaldson. In the endless stretches between pointless White House briefings, Donaldson performs for his colleagues, who record him with their eager cameras. He moves jerkily, like a jack-in-the-box, an effect enhanced by the plastic coil springing out of his ear. "Stick it in my ear. Stick it in *your* ear," he says to his helper. Donaldson then drops his pen and scrambles for it. "Excuse me, I'm from Puerto Rican television," he says upon rising.

You overhear an aide to Erskine Bowles complain bitterly that "the glee is really stomach-turning." She's referring to the press, but she can't possibly mean the regulars, who are sleepless and grumpy and trapped like jailbirds with nothing to chew on but scraps. She must mean the cameramen. They are also working overtime, but at least they are getting paid for it. One of the CNN crewmen shipped in from Atlanta brags he's earned at least $1,000 in overtime and hardship pay. They get to talking about the Super Bowl, then one of them comes up with a brilliant idea: put the overtime money into a pool, guessing what day Clinton will resign. The pool, he says proudly, will be called "Death Blow." His friend looks dubious and suggests they bet instead on how many times press spokesman Mike McCurry will duck the question of what exactly Clinton means by "sexual relationship," using some formulation like "asked and answered." They settle on the latter.



"Five minutes till briefing," announces a disembodied voice, and the cameramen sprint into place. Will the president provide more details, one reporter asks. "Certainly," answers McCurry. When? "At the proper point." Does no sexual relations mean no sexual intercourse? "I'm not going to dignify that question." "I don't want to get into, you know...." "I can't." "I have not." At one point, loopy Sarah McClendon, the oldest living White House reporter, shrieks, "Why did he give her a dress?"—a very good question, even if she did ask twice. "Sarah, I'm not in a position here to deal with that question." The cameramen count 32 total evasions. The highest guess prior to the briefing was 25.

Next day. It's the mad spin session after the State of the Union, and this time there are hundreds of people dying to answer questions. Only no one's actually mentioning Monica by name. Instead, the spinners speak of the "distraction factor," the "troubles," or the "irritation," depending on what side they're on. The most popular phrase seems to be the "allegations swirling about," accompanied by an index finger swirling about the ear.

The star of the evening is Bob Barr, the representative from Georgia who was pushing impeachment proceedings against Clinton long before the "troubles." During the entire hour-long speech, Barr did not clap or budge from his seat once. If he moved, it was to scratch his shoulder or blink hard, adopting the minor tics of the self-styled house madman. "I have respect for the presidency, but I have no respect for the individual in that office," he sulks. "You can only stand and applaud for a person you respect." Later you see him standing behind Sam Donaldson, who is standing on top of a plastic box. "I have no respect for the..." Barr tells another reporter. Donaldson, meanwhile, now has plastic coils sprouting from all over his body, down his pants and through his legs and wrapped around his feet. He is pivoting back and forth on the box saying nothing, like the South Street seaport mime.

A man with a beard is sticking a plastic coil behind your ear. "Five, four, three, two, one—Welcome to Geraldo!" says Geraldo, and introduces an endless list of guests, among them "Hannah Roslyn at our studio in Washington." You wonder whether to bother correcting him. The New York audience whoops and cheers and whistles into your plastic coil. You can hear them, but all you can see in this dark and lonely Washington studio is a black camera lens above a pair of legs. At one point, a woman weeps that Clinton got her pregnant, and tacitly encouraged her to get an abortion. (Is she a guest or a news clip?) The studio audience hisses into your coil. Geraldo's resident psychiatrist says Clinton is obviously a "sex addict," that he and Hillary are "codependent." But it's okay, he just needs "help." Cheers fill the coil.

The man with a beard whispers to jump in when you feel like it. "Be aggressive," he says. You think frantically about how you can make the coil cheer. The other Washington guest, Democratic consultant Jennifer Laszlo, goes first. "What the president should be worrying about is not Paula Jones, but Dow Jones." You know you've heard that before, but where? Finally, you come up with the perfect sentence. "Geraldo, Geraldo." You speak into the dark room. Silence. "Geraldo. Wash here," says the cameraman. Silence again. The coil is dead. •

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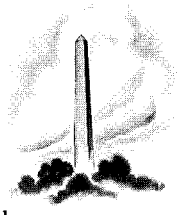
CLUTCH SITUATION

By Stephen Glass

It's been two days since Monica Lewinsky became a household name, and the talk here at Cities, a trendy bar in Washington's Adams Morgan neighborhood, is much the same as it is in taverns across the country. Three twentysomethings sit hunched over a small table, taking frequent drags on Camel Lights, nursing vodka martinis, and feverishly speculating about the details of President Clinton's sex life.

But Cities is not just any watering hole. It is a famous haunt for White House interns, and the three twentysomethings were once Lewinsky's colleagues. All of which may explain why this particular conversation has taken an unusual turn: while the country bickers over *whether* Clinton had an affair, these three are debating *with whom*. "When I heard that he had sex with an intern, it didn't really get to me," says one. "What got me was that it was her. I mean, come on, Monica? Monica?"



The former intern, speaking on condition of anonymity because she is already fending off calls from "Hard Copy" and "Inside Edition," goes on to rattle off about a half-dozen interns she thought were "much more likely" to have had an affair with the commander-in-chief because they seemed either more attractive or to have had better access. The other interns in the bar disagree—Lewinsky, they say, is as plausible a candidate as any—but everyone present agrees on the basic premise of the conversation: Lewinsky was just one of many interns who sought the president's attention and maybe even his affections.

Lewinsky, it turns out, was a classic "clutch"—White House parlance for an intern who seems more interested in presidential face time than resume-building. Clutches maneuver to be near the president, and they're infamous for bragging about their encounters—even to the point of exaggeration. "Having it with the President in the Oval Office is the dream of a clutch," says a former intern. "It's what clutches think about when they eat, sleep, and just live." (Male clutches are prone to similar thinking, by the way. "If the President were a woman, I would do whatever she wanted," says a 1997 male clutch. "What a thrill.")

If, indeed, a clutch ultimately brings down this presidency, the administration will have only itself to blame, since Clinton himself inadvertently created the conditions under which clutch culture could thrive. It all began in May 1992, when campaign advisers Bruce Reed and John Kroger fired off what seemed like a savvy and innocuous proposal: cut the White House staff by a quarter and thereby prove that Clinton was serious about reinventing government. While veterans of the Carter administration warned that such downsizing would cripple White House effectiveness, Clinton's pollsters loved the idea. Shortly thereafter, Clinton made the promise.

Once Clinton won, however, it took all of one day for his advisers to realize that the pledge was pure hubris. As one staffer soon admitted to reporters, the White House was already pretty lean. With 25 percent fewer people, basic functions like opening the mail would suffer. The administration had to make up for the cuts—and it had to do so without reneging on its promise—so it hired more unpaid interns. Where previous administrations had hired about 50 interns at a time, Clinton would hire about 250.

The result was predictable. Since 21-year-olds couldn't shoulder the responsibilities of career civil servants, they had to be relegated to doing menial tasks such as mail sorting, and that meant clustering them in designated offices at the Old Executive Office Building. The staffer-to-intern ratio plummeted. Attention from high-profile officials, particularly the president himself, was hard to come by. And so the jockeying began.

Interns are not supposed to bother the president for autographs and pictures, but the clutches are a determined bunch. As a result, say staff and former interns, what should be a way station on the career track can resemble summer camp. On at least three separate occasions, interns have gotten into trouble for autograph-seeking. According to Isaac Tyo, a former University of Illinois researcher who has studied Washington internships, clutches are constantly "rushing into hallways to get a glimpse of the President if they hear he may be passing through."

Afterwards, the clutches swap tales of success. "The interns have tried to turn this into a frat party," says one longtime staffer. Some clutches have kept public tallies of presidential encounters, another pet peeve of White House personnel managers. One notorious clutch kept a napkin with the president's autograph in his pocket at all times. At parties, he would brag to women about his White House job, then whip out the napkin to prove it. (The intern, who now works at a think tank and begged not to be identified, said the napkin ploy rarely worked. Nevertheless, he keeps it framed in his office.)

Initially it was thought that the infusion of youth would lift spirits at the White House, particularly among the career staff. But precisely the opposite has occurred. While many interns at the White House earn high marks for their diligence, according to several officials, the clutches in each batch are a constant source of aggravation because their preoccupation with meeting the president comes at the expense of work. Since White House internships don't pay, most interns come from affluent backgrounds, and some boast high-powered connections. (Monica Lewinsky was reportedly recommended by a wealthy Democratic donor.) This is in sharp contrast to the modestly paid civil-service employees.

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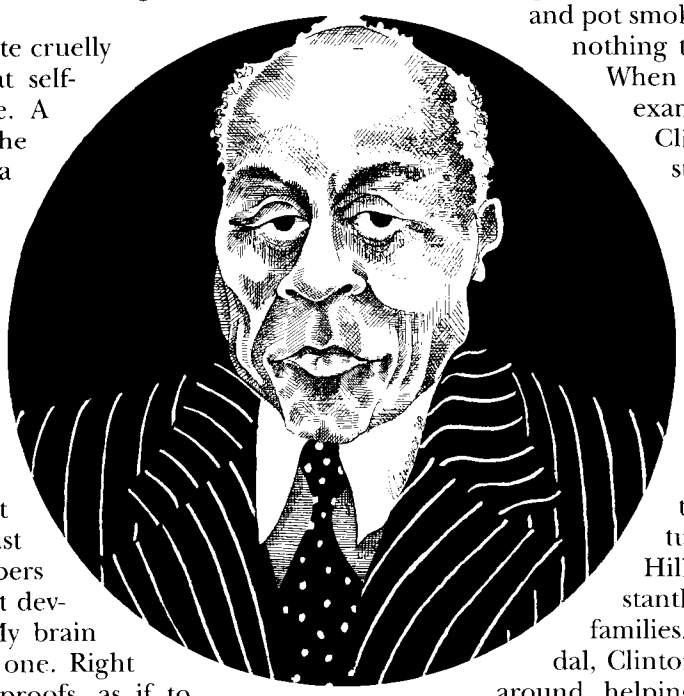
Some clutches even hold reunions where they compare tales of new politerati pursuits, although such experiences seem ho-hum next to their White House days. Late last week, I tracked down one such gathering at the Front Page, a bar south of Dupont Circle. As the meeting broke up, the "aggressive interns," as this group prefers to call itself, held a vote on whether they believed Lewinsky had the affair. Most of them did. "What Monica is saying has got to be true," said Jamie Olyn, the wife of a former clutch. "Clutches exaggerate, but they don't just make things up out of thin air. They love the President—and that would hurt him far too much." •

Clinton lets the Democrats down.

FEEL MY PAIN

By Jonathan Chait

Journalists often write things that seem quite clever at the time and subsequently appear astonishingly stupid. Yet our egos remain unscathed because this cycle usually takes months or years, long enough to dim the memory of our prognosticative failures and, in time, for us to recall ourselves as having been correct all along.



Every so often, though, fate cruelly turns on us so quickly that self-delusion cannot keep pace. A week ago, I woke up still in the throes of writerly euphoria from completing an article the night before. It modestly predicted a new golden age of Clintonian dominance, and the more I thought about it, the more cogent my argument sounded to me. I might still remember this piece as a triumph of political insight, if not for the fact that it was set in type just twelve hours before newspapers unveiled the latest and most devastating Clinton scandal. My brain had no time to fudge this one. Right next to my article's page proofs, as if to mock them, sat that day's *Washington Post*. All I could do was gaze forlornly at my stillborn treatise before it went off, doomed, to the printing press. "Clinton's new program represents a renewal of liberal activist government," I had written, along with, "The very nature of the political climate has changed," and, "Republicans appear helpless in the face of Clinton's new policy onslaught."

How was I to predict Monica Lewinsky? My political science professors lectured about interest groups and iron triangles but had nary a word to say about oral sex. And now—assuming that world events do not once again maddeningly reverse their course—Clinton's sexual predilections have completely eclipsed his policy agenda.

My complaint with this isn't the continued decay of Clinton's sexual morality: I'd accept many more presidential trysts in return for a billion dollars more for the Earned Income Tax Credit. And if Clinton's indiscretion threatened nothing more than his own reputation and my reportorial predictions, I could share the secret Schadenfreude that most journalists are enjoying. No, the depressing thing for me is that the prospects for enlightened public policy are tethered, absurdly, to the president's libido. Clinton's job approval rating may be high for the moment, but as long as he remains in office, the White House will have to devote a large chunk of its time to scandal control. News stories about Clinton's proposals will all begin something like, "In an effort to distract from his ethical and legal woes, Clinton proposed today to. . . ."

The timing could not be more ironic, for until the day Lewinsky's story broke, there was every indication that Clinton had finally overcome the personal liabilities that had so famously handcuffed him during the previous six years. When Clinton took office, Republicans exploited his reputation as a philanderer, draft evader, and pot smoker to kill initiatives that had nothing to do with his personal life. When it came to health care, for example, people distrusted "The Clinton Plan." Yet, when pollsters described the plan without linking it to Clinton, large majorities approved. Clinton got the message: it's not enough for the public to agree with his ideas if they find him personally disagreeable.

So Clinton spent the better part of the last four years reshaping his image to fit more conservative cultural mores—by restraining Hillary's public role and by constantly extolling the benefits of families. Yet, thanks to this latest scandal, Clinton's plan to build an agenda around helping families will surely face ridicule. Without a Democratic majority, Clinton's proposals for child care and education probably can't pass on intrinsic merit alone. Few Americans are even aware of most legislation, and of those who are, fewer still have any grasp of the details. The public does not

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have completely separate mental categories to evaluate the president's policies and the president's character. Thus, Republicans will be able to exploit cultural queasiness again. A blow to Clinton is a blow to Clintonism.

Is that fair? Of course not. It's not fair that Ken Starr has unlimited time, money, and power to conduct a sexual inquisition in the guise of a legal investigation. And it's not fair that the important issue of what Clinton does to the country gets clouded by the insignificant issue of what he does to his interns. But these happen to be the rules of politics. And while it's possible to rail against those rules and refuse to comply with them, Clinton is in no position to do so.

After all, the very basis of Clinton's legitimacy is not that he personally or intellectually represents the moral vision of the Democratic Party in its purest form. It's that he understands and accepts political reality in ways that, say, Michael Dukakis never would. Clinton is willing to dramatically oversimplify his ideas in order to appeal to the least common denominator. He has an affected public persona—hugging, extended eye contact, crying—that makes people like me cringe. He is willing to adopt the rhetoric, even the ideas, of conservatives in order to prevail. Whenever Clinton has done something liberals don't like—either symbolic things, like saying the era of big government is over, or practical things, like eliminating welfare—he justified such compromises in the name of expediency. This was a deal that Clinton made with his party, and, rightly or wrongly, most liberals bought into it. Now, he's breached that contract. He has recklessly and selfishly jeopardized the political capital he accumulated. And all at once we find that the promised day of deliverance, so painfully purchased, may never arrive at all. So the question becomes: What good is Clinton now? •

The hypocrisy of Hillaryism.

WIFE STORY

By Margaret Talbot

If you wander through your local library into the section marked "Biography—Children's," you'll find four, maybe five books devoted to the exemplary life of our current first lady. They all have stirring titles—*Meet Hillary Rodham Clinton: A First Lady for the '90s, Hillary Rodham Clinton: A New Kind of First Lady*, and so on—and they are full of words like "breakthrough" and "pioneer" and "role model." All of these books portray Hillary Clinton as she often portrays herself—she is the nation's working-mother-in-chief, its leading virtuecrat, a woman for other women to emulate. "Who knows?" crows one such inspirational volume. "If we can get used to a powerful first lady, we might actually elect a woman as president!"

Well, let's hope that's not the only way. For in the wake of Bill Clinton's most recent sexual disgrace, it seems harder than ever to scrunch our eyes shut and construe Hillary Clinton as a feminist icon, a role model for young women of talent and ambition. It would be one thing if we could not imagine her having run for office or pursued a successful career on her own. But we can, easily. So the bargain she seems to have made—to put up with the humiliations of marriage to an apparently indefatigable womanizer in exchange for a share of his power—seems, increasingly, like just that: a bargain, an unidealistic and demeaning deal that allows her to attain public authority at the cost of her own dignity.

After all, it's not as if she ever wanted to be a traditional first lady, a display-quality consort poring over wallpaper swatches and dabbling in good causes. It's not as if the Clintons had some sort of sophisticated open marriage, an equal partnership in which they both engaged in discreet dalliances. And it's not even as if Bill Clinton had an intelligent, well-mannered mistress of a certain age—the solution that European journalists are always recommending, with much Gallic sighing. (Clinton's choice of women—if the details of the latest allegations prove true—was a little more volatile and a little more embarrassing; though frankly, it's hard to imagine Americans stretching their ideal of marriage enough to accommodate an official mistress in widow's weeds.) No, none of these things is true of Bill and Hillary, and that leaves us with the image of a wife who, to borrow from the therapeutic language to which the Clintons sometimes repair, seeks to "empower" herself through "enabling" her husband. Leporello the wife.

Hillary Clinton's response to the Monica Lewinsky and Kathleen Willey scandals is—rhetorically anyway—much like her response to the Gennifer Flowers scandal. In interviews this week, her strategy has been to attribute any and all sexual allegations against Clinton to the machinations of the political enemies they share—"a vast right-wing conspiracy," as she said on the "Today" show—and, in so doing, to resist the image of passivity we associate with women who put up with far too much from their husbands. As she famously declared in the Clintons' 1992 appearance on "60 Minutes," she is "not some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette." But surely Tammy Wynette would have walked out by now. Hillary Clinton, however, is standing by Gennifer's and Monica's man, and she is inflicting damage not only on her own image, but also on the gender politics of the Clinton administration and the internal consistency of contemporary feminism.

How much credence, for example, can we grant her minicampaign against divorce? In *It Takes a Village*, her 1996 guide to child rearing and family policy, Clinton writes that "My strong feelings about divorce and its

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effects on children have caused me to bite my tongue more than a few times during my own marriage and to think instead about what I could do to be a better wife and partner." She counsels other couples to stick with their marriages through the rough times, as she did. But just how rough do the rough times have to get? If the rest of us followed her personal example, there probably would be fewer divorces, but there would be many more miserable married people, parents, and children. (And most unhappy wives don't have the Lincoln Bedroom to sob in.)

Standing by her man has also, of course, meant colluding in a damage-control campaign that trafficks in some rather unsavory stereotypes about women. Gennifer Flowers was lying because she was a tramp; Paula Jones was lying because she was trailer-trash; Monica Lewinsky is lying because she is "flighty, flirtatious, prone to exaggeration," as National Public Radio correspondent Mara Liasson characterized the off-the-record picture of the former intern that mysteriously leaked from the White House this week. That, it seems, is Bill Clinton's m.o.: hit on them and then humiliate them.

For feminism, though, the consequences of standing by Bill go beyond all that. Like Hillary (but without her emotional stake in the matter), prominent women's movement leaders have been busy excusing Bill Clinton. "Until we know the facts, the real facts of what happened, it's not a good idea to speculate on anything," said Kate Michelman, the president of the National Abortion Rights Action League, who went on to praise Clinton for "the courage of his convictions" on women's issues. Her apologetics wouldn't be worth noting except that they present such a marked contrast with the mainstream feminist reaction to earlier sex scandals, in which the partisan lines cut rather differently. In 1993, when women's groups were calling for Republican Robert Packwood's immediate resignation from the Senate in light of sexual harassment charges against him, they declared his record of support for abortion rights irrelevant. Packwood's sexual attentions to female staffers, Michelman said at the time, constituted "an egregious violation of his commitment to women's issues." And Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, declared that whatever good Packwood had done for women's causes, continuing to support him would inevitably raise the issue of "Can we be bought? And, if so, how cheap?"

Now it's true that women's groups were probably taken to task too harshly for failing to rally behind Paula Jones: they had a right to suspect the political motivations of Jones supporters who had never seemed to care much about sexual harassment before. But if, as a feminist, you have long promoted the idea that female accusers are to be given every benefit of the doubt; if you argue that sexual harassment can be defined in terms not only of crude quid pro quo demands but also of consensual relationships between people on different rungs of an office hierarchy; if you think that women constitute not only an interest group but a sisterhood, and that silence is always the enemy of justice—then you had better speak up for Paula Jones, even if she *is* surrounded by Clinton-hating handlers.

Besides, the contemporary women's movement has staked much of its claim to moral authority on the argument that the personal is political. Indeed, that very dubious doctrine—along with some pious journalistic excuses about the public's right to know and the "character issue"—has helped justify all sorts of digging into the private lives of politicians that would otherwise have to be written off as instances of mere prurience. The slogan has served as an article of faith for decades of feminism. If the personal is political, then Bill Clinton's alleged affair with a 21-year-old working for him in the White House—which is to say the home he shares with his family—is political. If the personal is political, then White House aide Kathleen Willey's sworn affidavit reportedly charging that Clinton grabbed her breast and placed her hand on his crotch when she met with him to request a full-time job is political. By feminist lights, these incidents say something as profound about Bill Clinton's attitudes toward women as his child-care or abortion policies do. "This has to be a heads-up for men in power," said Ireland, a little infelicitously, of the Packwood case. "You can't treat women as the spoils of power." Or as the spoils of feminism.

All around this story are the regrettable forces that will keep it in the news: an arrogant independent prosecutor and a powerful sexual harassment police; a celebrity culture that doesn't know how to assess the scandals it keeps unearthing and that misses the privacy it threw away; an all-American amalgam of prudery and prurience. But then Clinton knew all about those forces impinging on his presidency, and he chose to flout them anyway. So at the center of this story is a man who did not have enough respect for his wife, or concern for "women's issues," or love of his country, or solicitude for his legacy to keep his zipper up. And his wife is his accomplice. •

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THE END OF PRIVACY

By Jeffrey Rosen

"It's not their business," Monica Lewinsky allegedly told Linda Tripp, explaining why she was inclined to lie to Paula Jones's lawyers about her relationship with President Clinton, as her friend's hidden tape recorder whirled. "It's not their business." And Lewinsky was, of course, correct. There is something totalitarian about the invasions of privacy that have transfixed the nation during the past week, as lawyers for Paula Jones have issued subpoenas to compel all women who have crossed President Clinton's path to discuss their sex lives under oath, and as Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr has used his subpoena power to compel the president's personal secretary to describe illicit activities in the White House that she may have observed.

Whether or not the Clinton presidency survives the Lewinsky affair, we will look back on this episode as a dark time in which America took on aspects of a police state. How could our Constitution, with its purported devotion to the right to be left alone, permit it? Part of the answer has to do with the dilution of the Fourth Amendment's guarantee against unreasonable searches and seizures—a dilution carried out, ironically, by the purportedly liberal Warren–Brennan Court during the 1960s and 1970s. The erosion of constitutional privacy protections, combined with the intersection of two other illiberal doctrines—sexual harassment law and the Independent Counsel Act—has exposed all Americans to violent breaches of the boundaries between public and private life. And because the president lives and works in the same place, his privacy is even more vulnerable to prosecutorial invasions than that of ordinary citizens.

The Fourth Amendment protects "[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures," and it's no exaggeration to say that prying invasions of sexual privacy were paradigm cases of the kinds of searches that the Framers of the Constitution considered inherently unreasonable. A Boston Pamphlet from 1769 attacked ex officio oaths because they allowed customs commissioners to harass their political opponents with leering and inappropriate questions such as these: "Pray Sir, when did you kiss your maid Mary? Where? And in what manner?... Did you lay with her in a barn? Or in your own house?" (The opponent in that case was Sam Adams, who was, of course, no Bill Clinton.) And, in 1787, a Pennsylvania anti-Federalist gave the following example of a patently unreasonable search: a male constable, he warned, might invade a woman's bedroom, "pull down the clothes of [her] bed," and "search under her shift."

The late nineteenth century was the high-water mark for constitutional privacy protections. In 1886, the Supreme Court held that subpoenaing a defendant's private papers in order to use them as evidence against him was the equivalent of forcing him to be a witness against himself; thus, it wasn't the "breaking of his doors, and the rummaging of his drawers that constitutes the essence of the offense"; instead, the Court held, any "invasions on the part of the government and its employees of the sanctity of a man's home and the privacies of life" violated the Fourth and Fifth amendments, which "run almost into each other."

But this robust conception of the right to privacy, as Akhil Amar of Yale Law School describes in his path-breaking book *The Constitution and Criminal Procedure*, was undermined in the twentieth century by two forces: the rise of the New Deal administrative state and the criminal-procedure revolution of the Warren–Brennan Court, which turns out to have been far less liberal than most people assume.

During the Progressive and New Deal eras, the Supreme Court concluded that if private papers were absolutely protected from government scrutiny, then the government couldn't require people to keep records in the first place, and the regulatory state would be stopped in its tracks. To ensure that health, safety, and economic regulations weren't impossible to enforce, the Court tended to invent a series of arbitrary exceptions to the constitutional bar on government invasions of privacy. In 1948, for example, the New Deal Court held that the Fifth Amendment wasn't violated by requiring someone to produce records that the government ordered him to keep in the first place, no matter how incriminating or embarrassing the records might be.

But the Warren Court went further still, delivering the coup de grace for constitutional privacy protections. In the sexual privacy cases leading up to *Roe* v. *Wade*, the

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Court waxed grandiloquently about "the sacred precincts of the marital bedroom." But the right to privacy in these cases turned out to be a clumsy metaphor for a very different and far narrower right: the right to make personal decisions about procreation. Meanwhile, in a series of less familiar criminal-procedure cases, the Court dramatically expanded the power of the police to conduct intrusive searches into intimate secrets and, in the process, threatened the privacy of innocent people.

As Amar argues, the Court during the 1960s, exalting the rights of the guilty over those of the innocent, began to focus on the absence of warrants and probable cause—rather than unreasonableness—as the touchstone of a Fourth Amendment violation. By announcing that judges should presume searches without warrants and probable cause to be unconstitutional, and that judges should exclude from trial any evidence discovered in a warrantless search, the Court painted itself into a corner, threatening to make information-gathering impossible. To avoid triggering the onerous warrant requirement for every search, the Court's ill-conceived solution was to pretend that lots of obviously unreasonable invasions of personal privacy weren't really searches or seizures in the first place.

In 1973, the Court held that a grand-jury subpoena ordering suspects to appear in the U.S. attorney's office to record their voices wasn't a "seizure." The Court's upside-down theory was that because subpoenas don't require probable cause or reasonable suspicion (the whole point of a grand jury is to decide whether probable cause for indictment exists), there couldn't be searches or seizures at all—never mind that it's hard to fathom how ordering someone like Monica Lewinsky to appear before a prosecutor on pain of imprisonment isn't a seizure. And, in a series of related cases, the Court went on to hold that planting microphones in people's clothing, trespassing in people's backyards, and spying on them with binoculars weren't searches or seizures, either. The result was to chip away at constitutional privacy protections at the very moment that techniques of surveillance were dramatically increasing.

Meanwhile, even as the Court was narrowing the scope of impermissible searches, it was expanding the scope of permissible warrants. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when vigorous protections for private property prevailed, magistrates could not issue warrants for "mere evidence" that a crime might have been committed. "To enter a man's house by virtue of a nameless warrant, in order to produce evidence, is worse than the Spanish Inquisition," thundered Lord Camden in 1763. Only the fruits and instrumentalities of a crime, such as contraband, could be seized, on the theory that they didn't belong to the suspect in the first place. In 1967, however, Justice William Brennan, of all people, issued one of the most pro-law-enforcement opinions in American history: he abandoned the ancient distinction and held that government could use warrants to search the homes of innocent witnesses and seize mere evidence as well as contraband. William Douglas—the same justice who discovered a right to privacy in "penumbras, formed by emanations" from the Bill of Rights in the birth-control cases—objected that Brennan's opinion threatened "the choice of the individual to disclose or to reveal what he believes, what he thinks, what he possesses."

Enter Paula Jones. During the 1990s, the vast expansion of the police power to compel innocent people to disclose sexual secrets, combined with the vastly expanded definition of sex discrimination to include "unwanted advances," has led to dramatic violations of what used to be called the "ordinary privacies of life." In this sense, if we need a precipitating agent for the Lewinsky affair, the most blameworthy candidate isn't Judge Kenneth Starr but Judge Susan Webber Wright, the Arkansas judge who permitted the lawyers for Paula Jones to rummage through President Clinton's sexual history in the first place. Even under the relaxed rules for civil depositions, which say that lawyers can use the subpoena power to ask about anything "reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence," judges can limit discovery when its "burden or expense ... outweighs its likely benefit." Of course, Wright, like the Supreme Court, was bending over backward to avoid the appearance of favoritism to the President, with illiberal results.

In a legal culture that took seriously the value of sexual privacy, subpoenas, like searches, would be subject to a general test of constitutional reasonableness. Indeed, judges might choose to enforce something like a sexual privilege, not unlike the priest-penitent privilege or the attorney-client privilege, that presumptively would shield innocent people from the need to answer questions about their legal, but embarrassing, sexual activities. Presented with a request from Clinton or Lewinsky, according to federal rules, Judge Wright could have issued an order to protect both of them from "annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden." But surely the judge should have been sensitive enough to privacy values to limit the scope of discovery on her own initiative; for, merely by asking for a protective order, Clinton and Lewinsky would have disclosed the very secret they wanted to conceal.

One way of thinking about the privacy issues in the Lewinsky affair is to consider privacy in relational, rather than individualistic, terms. Perhaps we should be most concerned about protecting people from being forced to reveal secrets that they have chosen to conceal, and less concerned about protecting information that people voluntarily confide in others. So, in the Paula Jones case, it was a grave violation of privacy for her lawyers to subpoena the widow of Larry Lawrence, the ambassador whose body was exhumed from Arlington Cemetery, to force her to deny rumors that she had been romantically involved with Clinton. And it was inappropriate for the Jones lawyers to ask Lewinsky about her relationship with Clinton, just as it was inappropriate to violate Lewinsky's privacy backhandedly, by asking Clinton about his relationship with her.

In Starr's criminal investigation, the privacy calcula-

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tions look a little different. It's arguable that, by confiding in Linda Tripp, Lewinsky ran the risk that her conversation would be recorded. In 1971, four justices said that a government informer carrying a radio transmitter could slyly elicit information from a criminal suspect, as an agent glued to a radio receiver secretly recorded the conversation in a nearby room. Because all of us have to assume that our friends might betray our confidences when we tell them about illegal activities, the Court held, the fact that the conversation was taped didn't make the defendant worse off. Since Starr thought Lewinsky was trying to persuade Tripp to lie in a deposition, there's no doubt his decision to wire her would be upheld by the Court today. On the other hand, Justice Harlan, dissenting in the 1971 case, worried that broadcasting private conversations to secret agents might "undermine the confidence and sense of security ... that is characteristic of individual relationships between citizens in a free society."

BILL CLINTON BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In any event, it's clear that the "sense of security" Harlan described is dramatically undermined by Starr's apparent effort to persuade Lewinsky to wire herself to record conversations with Betty Currie, the president's personal secretary. (Wouldn't secret bugging in the White House violate federal espionage statutes?) The Supreme Court has held that people have less privacy in their homes than in their offices, but surely the White House, our national home–office, should have more protection than an ordinary apartment rather than less. And rumors of the flurry of subpoenas that Starr would issue to force Secret Service agents and White House aides to answer questions about the president's sexual activity bring to mind visions of, well, the Spanish Inquisition, and it offends the fundamental principle that innocent people shouldn't be compelled to disclose secrets that they haven't voluntarily shared with anyone else.

As the president digs in his heels, one of the many distressing legacies of Watergate and Whitewater is that there are so few zones of privacy within the White House where Clinton can seek confidential advice. Like the rest of us, the president can't be sure that his confidences will be kept except when he talks to his lawyers. If you tell your friend a secret, she can betray you or be subpoenaed. If you tell your lawyer a secret, because of the attorney-client privilege, she can't be subpoenaed and won't betray you for fear of being disbarred. And in the Nixon tapes case, the Supreme Court held that the president's conversations with his confidential aides weren't privileged. This means that, whatever President Clinton's story, he can't unburden himself to his friend Mike McCurry for fear McCurry will be subpoenaed.

But, unlike most of us, the president lives and works in the same place and is constantly scrutinized, even in his private quarters. And in the Whitewater executive-privilege case decided last spring, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit further constricted the circle of people to whom the president can entrust his secrets. Even the attorney-client privilege is waived, the court held, when the president's private lawyers meet in the same room as his official lawyers. This means that one of the few people in whom President Clinton can confide safely is his wife, who benefits from the spousal privilege and the attorney-client privilege at the same time.

It was Hillary Rodham Clinton, on "60 Minutes" in 1992, who lamented the fact that there was no "zone of privacy" in which candidates and their wives could seek refuge. More recently, she described the feeling of being "hollowed out" by the erosion of the boundaries between public and private life. We may be on the verge of a national conflagration, as the president and his wife commit themselves to a version of events that may well be untrue—with no legal opportunity for a sane counselor to talk them out of it—and, at the same time, the leering machinery of the independent counsel is mobilized to ferret out secrets that never should have been exposed to legal scrutiny in the first place. When the privacy of the body politic is violated, we're all brutalized in the process. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Notes on a Visit

Recurrently the film world is assayed by an outsider—a "let me set your house in order" visit from an eminence in another field, usually an historian or sociologist or literary light. The latest example is an article called "Clio at the Multiplex" by Simon Schama in the January 19th *New Yorker*, in which, beginning with *Amistad*, he presents what he sees as vulgarizations, lapses, and achievements in some historical films.

Schama, whose brilliance as an historian needs no endorsement here, follows form: he presents his bona fides the way visitors often do, by mentioning a number of films he has seen, together with his enthusiasm for some of them. He concludes: "The most enduring historians have always valued the necessary alliance between picture-making and argument." This has certainly been proved in such books as his own rich *Landscape and Memory* and Martin Meisel's superb *Realizations* (which studies relationships between narrative, pictorial, and theatrical arts in nineteenth-century England). No conceivable dissent on that conclusion. It is some of Schama's suggestions en route, for the improvement of *Amistad*, that provoke discussion.

He objects to the closing speech that Steven Spielberg gives to John Quincy Adams before the Supreme Court, with its "ringing appeal to ancestor worship." Schama's ground is that "the case turned neither on the morality nor on the legality of slavery in America, but on the slave *trade* on the high seas." Technically this is true, but it ignores the massive subtext of the film. The real antagonist in this drama—one might almost say protagonist—is the United States of America. *Twice* the lower courts had decided in favor of the Africans' freedom, and *twice* the government of this country persisted in trying to keep them in slavery. Adams's appeal to the Supreme Court to remember the founding principles of the United States, despite the slaveholders among those Founding Fathers, may not be historically exact, but it is dramatically and thematically apt.

Then, says Schama, there is "an opportunity that Spielberg passes up." Spielberg omitted the fact that one of the Supreme Court justices died in his sleep before Adams had finished his address to the Court, which in actuality stretched over two days. (The justice died during the intervening night.) What, really, was this opportunity that Spielberg passed up? The chance to splay the narrowing focus that he wanted as the film approached its climax by spreading the Supreme Court hearing over two days, in order to include a historical datum of absolutely no relevance to that climax.

And, according to Schama, that wasn't Spielberg's only omission. "At the climax of the true Amistad history, Spielberg missed, somehow, an astounding story that ought to have been a director's dream." What is this dream story? A few days before the Supreme Court hearing, Adams was descending from his carriage near the Capitol when his horses were startled by the testing of a Colt rifle nearby. The coachman was hurt by the horses and died of his injuries the next day. "For the devoutly religious statesman," says Schama, "there could have been no more shocking witness that Providence was watching over the unfolding drama."

I have pondered that sentence considerably and am still unable to understand why the death of that coachman assured Adams that Providence had an eye out for the fate of those Africans. It may be, as Schama says, that this confluence of "Colts, carriage horses, and Calvinism" is "the kind of historical collision undreamed of in scriptwriters' fiction," but it's easy to see why they dream otherwise—when the historical collision has no dramatic relevance to the story and is no kind of textural increment.

All these criticisms by Schama seem to fall into one of two categories: either they reveal a questionable sense of dramatic/cinematic structure, or they are meant to display reaches of historical scholarship beyond that of Spielberg and his colleagues. Or, of course, they may fit both categories.

What disturbs further—and, admittedly, this goes deeper into the area of subjective response—are some of Schama's admirations. He holds up Scorsese's *Kundun* as a counterexample to *Amistad*, calls it an "undersung masterpiece" among historical films, and says that "Scorsese has invented a disconcerting visual language that flows naturally from his subject and does the necessary work of shaking the audience loose from habitual expectations of what a history movie is." I'm a longtime admirer of Scorsese, not least of the film about a

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Amistad. *Strong, wonderfully textured drama of a slave revolt in 1839. The score is regrettable, but the acting and directing are fine. (Reviewed 12/22/97)* **Ma Vie en Rose.** *Perception and delicacy in this Belgian story of a little boy who wants to be a girl. The ending falters, but the boy is understood. (1/26/98)* **The Sweet Hereafter.** *Quiet, poignant account of a town desolated by the loss of its children in a bus accident. Ian Holm is masterly as a lawyer who comes to help. (12/8/97)* **Wag the Dog.** *Robert De Niro as a political spinmeister, Dustin Hoffman as a Hollywood producer, Barry Levinson's directing and David Mamet's dialogue keep this political satire sizzling, even though the ending unsizzles a bit. (2/2/98)*—**SK**

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spiritual leader that he made before *Kundun*. *The Last Temptation of Christ* seemed to me to do a great deal more "shaking the audience loose from habitual expectations" than *Kundun*, and not just because Jesus was more active in the world than the Dalai Lama. *The Last Temptation* was a true Scorsese film: this vigorous, individualistic director presented *his* Christ just as innumerable painters and sculptors have presented theirs. *Kundun*, on the other hand, is nervously bland, a series of respectful episodes. Schama finds in it elements of Satyajit Ray and Olivier and *Gone With the Wind*. Perhaps; but this in itself proves little more than, say, finding reminders of Max Ophuls (which one can do) in a recent Dutch blob called *The Dress*. For me, to exalt *Kundun* as a prime instance of historical filmmaking is to cede the field to *National Geographic*.

To be sure, Schama names other films, all made outside Hollywood, that are indeed "powerful history movies, created in the poetic, not the instructional mode"—works by Visconti and Jancsó and Rossellini and Tarkovsky and Herzog and, most acutely, Yves Angelo's *Colonel Chabert*. But then Schama clouds matters again by equating the quietly fierce filmmaking vision in Angelo's film with the style of *Kundun*. As it happens, I recently saw *Colonel Chabert* again and am left aghast at this equation with Scorsese's picture.

I had better say I'm not trying here to assert that only a professional film critic has the right to express opinions about film. Such arrogance would be bootless, anyway. So many people are affected by film that these visitors to film criticism, basically, prove a cultural phenomenon. Early in this century it was a standing joke that everyone had two professions, his own and theater criticism. The change in the second profession corroborates a fact: film is one of the few universal cultural linkages that the human race currently possesses.

I am merely pointing out that, when a person of large reputation in another field decides to pay a little attention to the film world in order to set it right, it is not obligatory to be humbled by the honor of his or her attention; it is not obligatory to be awed by a judge whose opinions must be considered sounder than ones we're used to because they come from outside the moiling world of film. •

The Stranger

By Tony Judt

Albert Camus: A Life by Olivier Todd translated by Benjamin Ivry

(Knopf, 434 pp., $30)

Olivier Todd's new biography of Albert Camus, which was published in Paris two years ago, is a fine book, and the best life of Camus available. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the book reviewed here. For its American edition, the publisher has hacked 400 pages off the original French work. Gone is much of the philosophy and nearly all of the intellectual and political context; and gone, too, are all the notes detailing Todd's copious research. The lame and insulting excuse for this travesty is offered in a "Translator's Note." It is that such material would not be "of sufficient interest to the American general reader." Unlike, say, the subject's busy love life.

It is hard to envisage an "American general reader" willing to spend $30 on a biography of Camus who would not be interested in the details of the public debates in which Camus was so active; but such a reader might well be put off by the pedestrian translation of this "abridged and edited" version. Unable or unwilling to find an English tone adapted to Todd's allusive and jaunty style, the translator has opted for a bland and mechanical reproduction of its cryptic phrasing. The whole thing reads like a cover story in *New York* magazine. Anyone with even the most minimally serviceable French should stay away from this book and find the French original.

Todd's book is an important moment in the recent rediscovery of Camus in France. But who lost him? Or so the English-language reader might well ask. Camus has never been out of fashion outside France. *The Stranger* and *The Plague* have had millions of readers worldwide. For more than three decades, however, he was an object of neglect and even derision in fashionable Parisian circles—"a philosopher for high-school children," as one commentator dismissed him. Lionized at the Liberation for his novels, his journalism, his Resistance record, his political engagement, and his ability to give succinct and eloquent expression to the "existentialist" mood of the hour, Camus fell steadily from favor through the '50s.

He was crushed by the brutal reaction of Sartre and others to his attempt, in *The Rebel* in 1951, to offer a criticism of the revolutionary illusions of the day. The civil war in Algeria that broke out in 1954 left Camus divided against himself, and silent: born in Algiers in 1913 of impoverished European parents, he could not easily imagine a France shorn of its North African extension. By the time he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, Camus was not alone in France in wondering whether he really deserved it. At the time of his death, in a car accident on January 4, 1960, his domestic reputation was in steady decline; and the changing literary and political tastes of the 1960s further marginalized his writings. It has taken a new generation of French readers—and the recent publication of *The First Man*, his unfinished autobiographical novel—to bring about a more sympathetic response to the man who was once heralded as France's most representative intellectual in the postwar world.

Camus's problem—and he knew it—was that he was from the start utterly and grievously misunderstood. Far from being a typical Parisian intellectual, he was the complete outsider. Even his good looks and his sexual conquests set him apart. (When Camus asked Sartre at one point why he tried so hard with women, the author of *Being and Nothingness* resentfully reminded his then-friend of the difference in their appearance: "*T'as vu ma gueule?*") Camus himself acknowledged in 1952 that "I am not a philosopher and I never claimed to be one." The burden of carrying the torch for a generation of "existentialists" always lay heavily on his shoulders: "I have little taste for the all-too-celebrated existentialist philosophy, and to tell the truth I believe its conclusions to be false." Camus's novelistic invocation of the "absurd" and the suggestive aphorisms of his wartime essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* had put him in the forefront of philosophical debate in postwar France; but as Todd acknowledges, he was an unsteady and inconsistent thinker, using "absurd" variously to mean contradictory,

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or false, or unreasonable, while arguing his case in a loose, hasty, and lyrical style. Even Raymond Aron, who sympathized with many of Camus's opinions, found his philosophical forays "puerile." This seems excessive; but it is true that Camus's way of thinking was uncongenial to the German-influenced philosophical taste of his most gifted contemporaries.

"Engagement," too, caused Camus increasing discomfort. Although he kept such thoughts to himself, at least until the mid-'50s, he resented from the outset the burden of expectation that was placed upon him always to have a political "position," to take a daily intellectual stand, to provide a moral justification for every public stance. The Manichean divisions of the early cold war, magnified in the hothouse of Parisian argument, left Camus uncomfortable: he tried to balance his growing anti-communism with criticism of the excesses of Western colonialism and "*la société marchande*," but he found the burden of maintaining an even-handed approach to the failings of East and West hard to carry. He took care always to tell the truth as he understood it, but he did not always tell all of that truth, especially those parts that were likely to cause pain to his friends, to his readers, to the progressive cause, to himself.

In France in those years, Camus's careful appearance of balance, his role as the disinterested voice of Justice, cost him a lot. He did not feel even-handed. He was not "neutral" between East and West, however hard he tried, in contrast to so many of his contemporaries; the "psychological debacle" of his public involvement (as he put it in 1951) caused him to feel increasingly guilty and dishonest. Like Clamence in *The Fall,* he began to punish himself for his own moral cowardice. Where Clamence was haunted by the voice of the woman whom he failed to save from drowning, Camus could not forgive himself for all those occasions in the postwar years when he had something to say but didn't say it, or else said it in a muted and acceptable form for the sake of political and social conformity. "I tried for years," he wrote in his *Journal,* "to live according to everyone else's morality. I tried to live like everyone else, to be like everyone else. I said the right things even when I felt and thought quite differently. And the result is a catastrophe."

More than any other French writer or intellectual of his age, Camus lived in the permanent purgatory of exile, physical, moral, intellectual. In one of his very earliest writings, *Été à Alger* ("Summer in Algiers"), he wrote that "a homeland is only ever recognized at the moment of its loss," and this sense of loss, of exile, of misplacement, is the central theme of his life and his work. He was always between homes. (Literally no less than metaphorically: married with two children, he spent little time at home, shuttling instead between wife, mistresses, and solitude.) He was at ease nowhere.

Courtesy Alfred A. Knopf

ALBERT CAMUS WITH JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT (LEFT) AND BALTHUS (CENTER)

His affection for Algeria and his familiarity with its climate and its topography are palpable in his novels, his essays, and his stories. Although he left North Africa in 1940 and never returned except for brief visits, Algiers was the place of which he had the strongest sense. He wrote once of the joy of leaving Paris for Africa, "a quiet jubilation, his spirit opening wide, the satisfaction of someone who has made a neat escape and who laughs when he thinks of the faces of the guards." But although he enjoyed the "otherness" of his North African origins, especially as a private relief from the public world of Paris, Algeria, too, was increasingly alien.

His vision of Algeria had been formed in the '30s, at a time when Arab sentiment was mobilized by men such as Ferhat Abbas, whose ideal of an independent Algeria was at least in principle compatible with Camus's dream of a peaceful and integrated community of Arabs and Europeans. By the mid-'50s, however, Abbas had been discredited by the failure of a series of French governments to make timely concessions or to promulgate serious economic or electoral reform; and his place had been taken by a younger generation of uncompromising nationalists for whom Europeans (in France or in Algeria) could never be partners, and who saw the indigenous European population of Algeria—the poor included—as their enemy. In this Algeria, Camus was an alien—as he discovered in January 1956, when he made a disastrous attempt to intervene in Algerian politics and to appeal to both sides for a truce in the war.

In Paris, Camus was alien not only on account of his political ambivalence in the face of his colleagues' certainties, but also owing to his background. A provincial scholarship boy who lacked the polish and the confidence of his new friends—Camus was educated at the local Algiers *lycée* and at the University of Algiers—he had been brought up in an impoverished family. His father was killed at the front when Camus was a year old, and he was raised by an illiterate and near-autistic mother and an exhausted and domineering grandmother. This triple sense of inferiority—for his social background, his provincial birthplace, and his undistinguished education—left Camus vulnerable in the snobbish and mean-spirited universe of the Left Bank. As he explained in a television appearance in May 1959, "I don't know why, but in the company of intellectuals I always feel I should be apologizing for something."

It is for this reason that criticism from his fellow intellectuals was always so wounding. Sartre, of course, barred no holds. On the occasion of their public break in 1952, when Camus protested the damning review of *The Rebel* in *Les Temps Modernes,* Sartre published an open letter in which he made his under-

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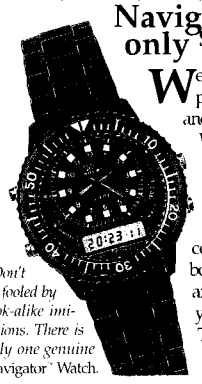

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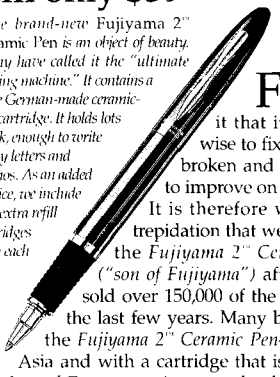

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lying feelings very clear: "And what if your book bore witness merely to your philosophical incompetence? If it were composed of hastily gathered knowledge, acquired at second-hand? If, far from obscuring your brilliant arguments, reviewers have been obliged to light lamps in order to make out the contours of your weak, obscure, and confused reasoning?" It was not just what Sartre said that caused Camus so much pain, and left scars that had not healed at his death; it was that it was said with all the authority that attached to a man who had graduated from France's top *lycée* to the École Normale Supérieure, and had gone on (like Aron) to come in first in the national philosophical exam, the *agrégation.*

All that Camus could offer in response was his private comment that Paris was full of "*faux grands hommes,*" the rueful reflection (consigned to his notebooks) that "Paris is a jungle full of seedy-looking beasts," and the famous image, in *The Fall,* of Paris as a pond full of piranha who can strip a work of art in five minutes for the simple pleasure of destroying it. But after the break with Sartre—which symbolized Camus's public expulsion from the community of *bien-pensants* progressive intellectuals—his internal exile took on a harsher and more self-pitying tone: "everyone [here] is against me, is remorselessly seeking a share in my destruction; no one proffers me his hand, comes to my aid, shows me affection for who I am."

Camus's gnawing sense of inferiority, a feeling that he was being "judged" by his peers and found wanting, was at one with his work, before and after Sartre's condemnation. The idea of judgment—the judgment of oneself, the judgment of others, judgment as an act of intellectual power, exile as an escape from judgment—is a constant of Camus's writing from *The Stranger* to *The Fall.* The latter novel can also be read as a brilliant, dyspeptic disquisition on the forensic habits of mind of the Parisian talking classes, "of those specialized cafés where our professional humanists sit."

As a working-class beneficiary of public education in the Third Republic, Camus was much less disposed than most other "professional humanists" to sneer at his country and his class. The wellsprings of anger and self-hatred of interwar French writers such as Drieu la Rochelle and Céline had transferred with remarkable fidelity to their postwar successors, but with this difference: the anti-bourgeois spleen that was vented in narcissism, anti-Semitism, nihilism, and philo-fascism was now diverted into metaphysical solipsism, "workerism," and frequent philo-Sovietism by Sartre, De Beauvoir, and their admirers.

In that orbit, certainly, Camus was truly an outsider, "parachuted" by historical accident into the teeming, overheated, self-regarding milieu of Parisian intellectual life and utterly at odds with it. Camus the republican Frenchman noted not just the self-hatred of the bourgeois intellectual and his (and her) fascination with violence, but also the enduring French intellectual prejudice that interprets a parade of cultural despair as a sign of higher intelligence—an observation that Camus addressed as much at Gide as at his own generation.

It is thus not surprising that Camus should have felt that his work was deeply misunderstood. (He once remarked that French critics had missed "my hidden side, the blind, instinctive one. French critics are interested primarily in ideas.") For this he blamed not just their insensitivity to Algerian settings and his emphasis on place and physicality, nor the growing political gulf between him and his contemporaries, but the contemporary obsession with politics itself. Politics had blunted the literary and moral sensibilities of a generation. The response to *The Plague* was typical. De Beauvoir castigated Camus for his assimilation of the plague to some kind of "natural" virus, his failure to "situate" it historically and politically—read: to assign responsibility for it to a party or parties within the story. Sartre made the same criticism. Even Roland Barthes, generally a more subtle reader, found in Camus's parable of the Vichy years an unsatisfactory failure to identify guilt. This criticism still surfaces occasionally among American scholars, who lack even the excuse of contemporary polemical passion.

The Plague may not be Camus's best work, but it is really not so very difficult to understand. The problem seems to arise from Camus's transposition of political choices and outcomes into a resolutely moral and individual key. This reversed contemporary intellectual practice, in which all personal and ethical dilemmas were typically reduced to political or ideological options. It is not that Camus was unaware of the political implications of the choices that men and women had faced under the German occupation—his own record in this respect was rather better than the record of his critics, which may help to account for the acerbity of their attacks. Yet Camus recognized something that many at the time still did not grasp: that the truest and the most interesting aspects of people's experience during the war were not the coarse divisions of human behavior into "collaboration" or "resistance," but the infinite range of compromises and denials that constituted the business of survival.

Camus had identified "the gray zone," where moral reckonings were influenced by self-interest and a carefully calculated failure to see what was too painful to behold. In conditions of extremity, simple and comfortable categories of good and evil, guilt and innocence, are rarely to be found. Men may do the right thing from a mixture of motives, and with equal ease they may make terrible mistakes and commit terrible crimes, with the best of intentions or with no intentions at all. It does not follow from this that the plagues that mankind brings down upon itself are "natural" or unavoidable. Still, assigning responsibility for them—and thus preventing them in the future—may not always be a simple business. At best, political labels and passions render crude and partial our understanding of human behavior and its motives. At worst, they contribute willfully to the very ailments that they confidently purport to address.

This was not a point of view calculated to make Camus feel comfortable in the hyperpoliticized culture of postwar Paris, nor to endear him to those—the overwhelming majority—for whom political labels and passions were the very stuff of intellectual exchange. Sometimes he sounds so alien to his environment as to be almost un-French; and Todd, himself only part French, is more sensitive to this side of Camus than any previous biographer. He calls attention in particular to Camus's Spanish ascendance on his mother's side, to a self-conscious air of honor and rectitude that could shade on occasion into a tone of superiority that others grew to resent. His distaste for affiliation (in romance as in politics), and his discomfort with the "engagement" that exercised so strong a fascination for his generation of Frenchmen, can make him seem rootless, cosmopolitan.

Unlike other "rootless cosmopolitans," however, Camus was utterly French in one very distinctive sense. He was a moralist. This requires some commentary. There is a long history of *moralistes* in France. They are something of a distinctive category in French public life and letters. The term, which has been applied over the past three centuries to theologians, philosophers, essayists, politicians, novelists, and occasionally professors, lacks the underlying pejorative and pedantic connotation of its English usage, as in "to moralize." A "moralist" in France has been a person whose distance from the world of influence or power allows him

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to reflect disinterestedly upon the human condition, its ironies and its truths, in such a way as to confer upon him (usually posthumously) a special authority of the sort commonly reserved in religious communities for outstanding men of the cloth. In another time and place, the secular term employed was "soothsayer," whose etymology captures part of the point: a "moralist" in France was someone who "told the truth."

But there was more to it than truth-telling. Raymond Aron, too, told the truth, and he, too, was unpopular, but that hardly made him a moralist. It seems to have been an important feature of moralists that they not only made others uneasy, but caused themselves disquiet, too. The sort of self-regarding discomfort that is audible in the writings of Rousseau: *that* is the tone of the moralist. To be a moralist was to lead an unquiet life—which is precisely what distinguished a moralist from an intellectual, whose public anguish over affairs of ethics or politics was ordinarily accompanied by an easy and confident private conscience.

Camus was a classic moralist in various keys, and not only in the structure of his novels, which led Jean Paulhan to tell François Mauriac that *The Stranger* put him in mind of *Candide* and *Jacques the Fatalist*. Camus was obsessed with a sense of limits—the need to avoid flights of fancy or dogma that lose touch with human fundamentals. In 1939, in a youthful review of Ignazio Silone's *Bread and Wine*, he picked out for comment the passage in which Silone's hero reflects on the risk of theorizing too much about the peasants and thereby coming to know them less.

Camus, too, worried about losing touch, about severing one's roots even before one has found them. It was this intuitive grasp of the condition of the rudderless intellectual that gives Camus's own ethic of finitude and responsibility—the duty to tell the truth, and to remain silent when you have nothing to say—its peculiar authority. One of the things that he had come to dislike most about Parisian intellectuals was their apparent conviction that they had something authoritative to say about everything, and that everything could be reduced to the kind of thing they liked to say.

As a moralist, Camus thought and wrote against the grain of his times in distinctive ways, all of which help to account for his difficulty in finding a home in his country and in his time. His suspicion of the overweening ambitions of modern man, released from the constraints of modesty imposed by religious faith, led him to think of human endeavors not in terms of their possibilities but in terms of their limits. His essays of the late '40s are powerful pleas for modesty and humility. (They are antecedents of the moral strictures of a thinker such as Vaclav Havel.)

By "humility," Camus did not mean that human beings should respond to their situation with resignation, with circumspection, or even with moderation. He continued to believe in the need for rebellion against evil in its manifold forms; but rebellion was not revolution. The contemporary passion for revolution in theory and in practice, the collective mobilization of men around projects driven by reason, terrified him. What came to count for Camus was what the classical writers meant by "measure," the preference for prudent wisdom over unleashed reason. In place of reason, Camus invoked responsibility. Indeed, his writings bear witness to an ethic of responsibility deliberately set against the ethic of conviction that marked and marred his contemporaries—though Camus's concept of "responsibility" differed sharply from Weber's or Aron's.

In retrospect, we can see that Camus was struggling toward a wholly alien notion, a notion for which there was no easy means of expression in the French political and moral philosophy of his day: the idea, made familiar to English readers through the writings of Isaiah Berlin, that life and thought consist of many sorts of truths, and that these truths might not be commensurate with each other. It was the idea of incommensurability, and the tolerance that is its corollary, that Barthes almost stumbled across in *The Plague*, and which he found so troubling and incorrect.

Despite his critics' loud misgivings, Camus was not inveighing against the Left; his real target was political extremism itself. In *The Plague*, the image that endures is of moderate men of moral measure revolting not for an ideal, but against intolerance and intransigence. In his writings during the cold war, Camus warned of the moral and political costs of ideological rhetoric. "Starting with a wise and healthy mistrust of bourgeois society's abuse of freedom," he wrote, "we have ended by becoming suspicious of freedom itself." Finally, in despair at the intellectual and political polarization over Algeria, Camus concluded: "The Right has given the Left exclusive rights to morality and received in return a monopoly on patriotism. France has lost twice over. It could have used some moralists less cheerfully resigned to their country's troubles."

There is a religious quality to Camus's thought that most of his contemporaries missed, but it is easy to see it today. Camus was no believer, of course. In a world shorn of absolute certainty, he wrote in *The Rebel*, men have "divinized" History. Desacralized society has made itself a simulacrum of religion and become the object of its own adoration. This was an unusual perspective from which to criticize the Promethean ambitions of his Marxist contemporaries, but it was perfectly consistent with Camus's immediate postwar search for moral "positions" in a world without the possibility of final knowledge—the aspiration and the language that had led to his misidentification with "existentialism."

In the end, the spokesman for multiple truths, for the imprudence of hungering after a single "true" path, found himself paradoxically in the position of the isolated defender of absolute values in an age of moral and political relativism. As a consequence, he came to be seen, to his acute discomfort, as a sort of public ethical assessor. His criticism of contemporary excesses brought down on his head the full wrath of Sartre, again:

> Who are you, to elevate yourself thus? By what right do you proclaim yourself prosecutor-in-chief on behalf of the good and the right—Who appointed you Public Accuser? The Republic of Superior Persons?... You pronounce sentence and the world remains unmoved. Your condemnations disintegrate upon contact with reality and you are obliged to begin again. If you stopped you would see yourself as you are: you are thus condemned to condemn, Sisyphus.

The rhetoric is distasteful, but Sartre had a point. Camus had proudly rejected any hierarchical system of values or authority, ideological or religious—but here he was, trying to impose a "view from nowhere," and not a very coherent one: "I continue to believe that there is no higher meaning to life. But something does have a meaning—man, because he alone strives for one." This stance, so out of step with the mood of the hour, was clearly articulated by Tarrou in *The Plague*: there can be only one unambiguous moral injunction, and it is the duty to fight evil. Establishing just in what evil consists is not the problem: the "plague" is at once obscure and obvious. The real problem, and the greatest risk, is that one may become a plague-carrier oneself. Or as Camus expressed it in his discussion of show trials, "political" justice, and capital punishment: in an absurd world, only an approximation of justice is possible—and one may not kill for an approximation.

Camus was not quite as alone or isolated as he suggests. Paris in the early 1950s teemed with exiles, cosmopolitans,

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marginals, survivors, and other flotsam and jetsam from the turmoil of the century. With Czeslaw Milosz, Konrad Jelenski, Arthur Koestler, Manès Sperber, and many others whom he knew there, Albert Camus was quite at home. Paris was the natural gathering place for such people—their only safe haven between 1933 and 1940, and the only interesting one for many of them after 1945. Britain was safe but inhospitable in more senses than one; and New York was still a semi-alien world even for those, mostly Jewish, who had reached it and made a home there. It was in Paris that Camus met the German and East European exiles, as well as Ignazio Silone, Nicola Chiaromonte, and Denis de Rougemont, men for whom voluntary or occasional exile in Paris made their political or cultural marginality back home in Italy or Switzerland more tolerable.

The mutual sympathy between Camus and the "foreign" intellectual community in Paris in the '50s is clear, and in striking contrast to the distance that often separated him from many of his French contemporaries. He was well-acquainted with the circle of liberal writers around *Preuves*, even if he did not always share their politics, and he was warmly received in Italian journals such as *Il Mondo* and *Tempo Presente*. Witold Gombrowicz (in distant Argentina) asked Czeslaw Milosz to send Camus his own works as an act of solidarity after the publication of *The Rebel*; Hannah Arendt wrote him, in April 1952, a warm and admiring letter of praise for the book. Camus was one of the rare French intellectuals to welcome the "Polish October" in 1956, and Central Europeans returned the compliment, appreciating and understanding the drift of his work.

And yet, despite his affinity for the voluntary and involuntary exiles of Paris, Camus remained politically apart. In his political sympathies, he remained a man of the Left. His dilemma was that he was instinctively a social democrat. In France, however, social democracy was the politics that dared not speak its name. For many of his contemporaries, in the Socialist Party and outside it, to abandon Marxism and the promise of a revolutionary *grand soir* was not only to give up a seductive myth, it was also to abandon to the Communists the well-tilled terrain of radical politics in France. (This was a dilemma in which the Left remained trapped until François Mitterrand's victory in 1981.) In the case of Camus, a tragic worldview, and a natural adhesion to the romantic nostrums of rebellion and proletarian purity, barred the road to social-democratic language and politics; but much of what he wrote, and virtually everything that he did after 1946, suggests that, for all his Mediterraneanism, he would have been much more politically at home in a northern European social-democratic milieu than he ever was in France.

Still, was Albert Camus in some ways a true mirror of France? It is a curious thought. For it is conventional among students of Camus to see in him a man who could not reconcile his personal needs, his ethical imperatives, and his political engagement. As the story goes, the passionate postwar radical became the moderate reformer before becoming the voice of "reason" and detachment, a position barely distinguishable from withdrawal into disappointment and silence. But there is more to the plot than this. Sartre, his malice notwithstanding, again came closer: "Your personality, real and alive when nourished by events, has become a mirage; in 1944 you were the future, in 1952 you are the past, and what seems to you most intolerably unjust is that all this has happened to you from the outside while you have remained the same."

What Sartre said of Camus was true, perhaps more true, of France. It was a country that had passed from the self-confident morning of Liberation to the sullen resentment of the middle years of the Fourth Republic; a country aware that the world was changing around it, and indignant at that fact. By the mid-'50s, the Resistance generation had grown uncertain and cynical. Camus's uncomfortable silence over Algeria was echoed by the collective silence of his intellectual contemporaries in the face of the unprecedented social and economic transformation that their country was about to undergo. They did not know what was happening around them, or else they turned their face resolutely against it. The thought would hardly have pleased any of the parties concerned, but Camus's own trajectory—from confidence to uncertainty to silence—is all too suggestive a metaphor for twentieth-century French intellectuals as a whole.

In *The Fall*, published in 1956, Camus writes of being a "*prophète vide pour temps médiocres.*" There is little doubt that he had long since come to see himself, in his gloomier moments, as an empty prophet, preaching to a deaf and unconcerned audience. In Arendt's phrase, though she did not use it to describe him, Camus was a "man in dark times," at odds with his countrymen and his country. Forty years later his country has finally caught up with him, and historians, philosophers, and latter-day moral-

Jacob

There is nothing at my door—no wingy thing kicking
at my door—in my head—no light down the hall—now
I just woke up to remember the hundred crows—they
burst out from the tree and accompanied me
for half block—their call ebbing and knotting above the
city block—*I contracted at my back and stomach*—
I zipped up my coat and began to count—I was at
what when they stopped their noise—just

there is nothing here—I didn't want you to leave—just
let that be over now—

just believe the first part—you—broken headed
and unable to come—they were all there
for a moment—swooping—broken speed against wind—
I shut the door to them—if you have to come back
come perfectly—silent and knotted—silent and I have
wanted to end myself for so long—you can't
change—I do not believe in you in any other skin—

stop—black on shifting black—actually
the sky was milky and the crows were black—just

you ate my leg out—you ate out my eye's color—
when you come back have wings—when you come back
smelling of me—don't sing—smelling of me on your
hot neck and smeared—don't talk—there
was snow streaming between the birds—I'll talk.

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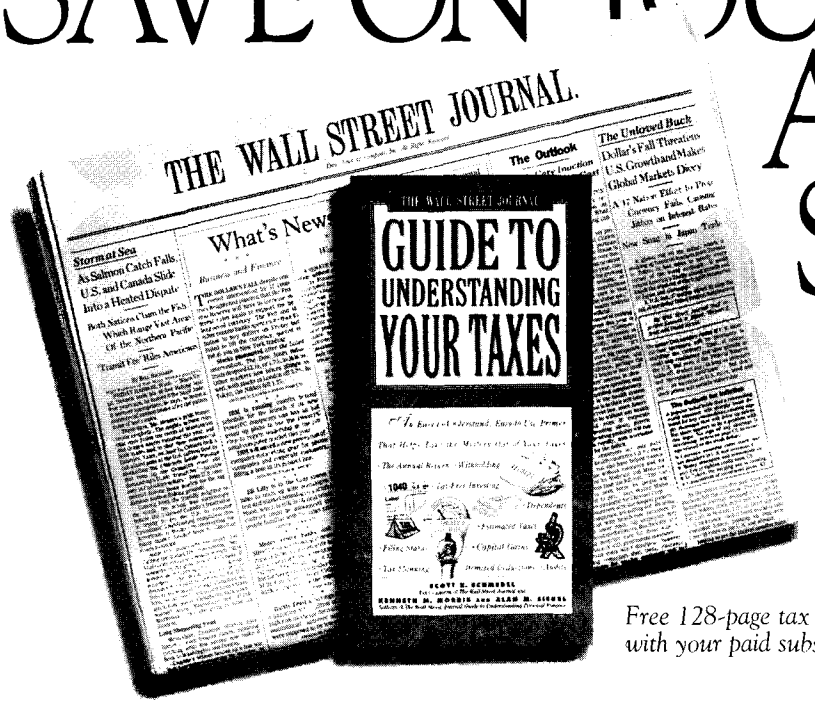

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ists have fallen over one another to condemn the shortcomings of their forebears, to say in their own words what Camus said so much more brilliantly and eloquently in his own. Even his unpopular silence over Algeria can now seem prophetic. Camus's appeal for a compromise between assimilationist colonialism and militant nationalism may have been naïve and self-interested, but his prognosis for a country born of terror and civil war has proven all too accurate: "tomorrow Algeria will be a land of ruins and corpses that no force, no worldly power will be able to restore in our century."

Where so many others went confidently astray, Camus got it right—thanks in part to his own lack of confidence. That is why he is the disinterred darling of the post-ideological, post-Sartrian generation of French thinkers. Camus demonstrated that the outsider saw things more clearly. It was entirely appropriate that outsiders assessed him more accurately than his mandarin contemporaries in France. "Yesterday I saw Camus," Arendt wrote in a letter to her husband in May 1952, reporting on her visit to Paris. "He is, undoubtedly, the best man now in France. He is head and shoulders above the other intellectuals." She was right.

TONY JUDT's new book, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century*, will be published this year.

Komar and Melamid and the irony racket.

From Stalin to SoHo

BY LEE SIEGEL

In Moscow last year, I had lunch at a hotel café with a Russian art critic. I'll call her Regina. A few minutes into our meeting she excitedly handed me a book of photographs by Oleg Kulik, a youngish performance artist. In these pictures, Kulik seemed to be having sex with a goat, a dog, and a bear. Regina spoke about the authenticity of Kulik's gesture, the purity of his conception, the honesty of his position. (His aesthetic position.) After she had enthused for a while, a group of Russian businessmen swaggered in, accompanied by an extravagantly dressed prostitute, and sat down at a nearby table. Regina glared at them as she carefully returned the photographs to her bag. "That's disgusting," she said.

Kulik is wildly popular in Russian artistic circles these days. In Moscow, in St. Petersburg, one encounters younger writers, artists, intellectuals who call for the exaltation of unreason, of antihumanism, of "stench," "filth," "evil." It is a sentimental nihilism laced with Russian histrionics, a *nostalgie de la boo-hoo-hoo*. But it is not unserious. And if you point out the obvious—that those were precisely the qualities, the real qualities, of the former regime—your interlocutor will say, Yes, precisely! and explain to you that what the communists called "reason," "humanism," and "morality" was the very opposite. These Russian artists and writers, you see, are performing an ideological unmasking.

If this sounds familiar, it should. Such ideas appear at first to be warmed-over Western postmodernism, though directed at a different set of adversaries. The almost fanatical references that Russian intellectuals make to Barthes, Lyotard, Foucault, Baudrillard, and the others only add to the feeling that you have seen the future and it is the past. And yet the difference between Russian postmodernism and Western postmodernism is chasmic. In the placid and prosperous West, one was sometimes hard-pressed to adduce living examples to convince the devout pomo that morality was not just an ideology of power. Under the Soviet regime, however, Russians had before them stirring counterevidence to the unstable meanings, the plentiful simulacra, the harvest of unreason reaped by the regime. In the dramas enacted around Sakharov, Sharansky, and other dissidents, Russians could witness a moral certainty that could not be reduced to ideology or power. But the pomos of Russia critique and deconstruct and interrogate Sakharov's morality right alongside communism's immorality! Communism's burlesque of a stable moral stance seems to have destroyed the possibility of a stable moral stance. In this way, Russian postmodernists are obliterating their intellectual birthright as a way of avenging themselves upon those who tried to obliterate it. Smart.

Western pomos transgress only logic and taste. But the transgressiveness of Russian pomos is a much sadder spectacle. These are people who have actually experienced the deconstruction of meaning and value, the reinterpretation of truth and falsehood by coercive political and social structures. But they celebrate the mentality anyway. They seem to prefer a hip, paralyzing reality to even the slightest whiff of moral assurance, whether its sponsor is Lenin or Herzen or Tolstoy. The everyday maneuvers and compromises of democratic politics fill them with scorn. They have become professional cynics and professional survivalists—as were the erstwhile commissars they profess to disdain. This is the worst irony of post-Soviet culture. Many members of the Russian intelligentsia travel along the lines of illogic laid down by the regime that they outlasted.

Enter Komar and Melamid.

The collaborative artistic team of Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid left the Soviet Union in 1977, when Komar was 34 and Melamid was 32. After spending almost a year in Israel, they arrived in New York in 1978, where for the most part they have had their studio ever since. Along with Ilya Kabakov, the New York- and Paris-based conceptualist who emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1987, Komar and Melamid are the world's best known living Russian artists.

References to twentieth-century Russian history and twentieth-century Russian art abound in Komar and Melamid's work. Their allusiveness is almost a kind of code, and so it is helpful to know how that history has dealt with that art. In 1922, with the approval of Trotsky and Bukharin, Lenin set up the AKhRR, or the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia, and instigated the suppression of the Russian avant-garde, who had enthusiastically supported and helped stage the Revolution. It was around this time that Lenin and Anatoly Lunacharsky, his "Commis-

Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art
edited by JoAnn Wypijewski
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 205 pp., $50)

The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia
by David King
(Metropolitan, 192 pp., $35)

LEE SIEGEL is a contributing editor at *ARTnews*.

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sar for Enlightenment," began to lay the groundwork for what eventually became socialist realism.

Socialist realism ran parallel to the illogical logic that infused the official rhetoric: it was a kind of visual doublespeak. The state was not so much lying as it was deliberately displaying its power to make its own truth. Forced labor on one side, and posters depicting smiling construction workers on the other; state-orchestrated starvation, and public images of bountiful harvests; the open secret of Stalinist repression, and portraits of Stalin as Christ. Socialist realism was a permanently latent irony—the lowest point in the history of irony, you might say—and it disheartened articulate opposition into a permanently ironic self-suppression. Its standards were set forth in 1934 by Bukharin, Gorky, and Zhdanov at the First Congress of Soviet Writers. A socialist realist work of art had to meet three main criteria: *narodnost* (sometimes called *massonost*), or accurate depiction of the life of "the people"; *ideinost*, or an adherence to official ideology; and *partinost*, or party spirit. Art falling outside these boundaries immediately became "unofficial" or "nonconformist."

From around 1934 until Stalin's death in 1953, art burrowed underground. In 1956, Khrushchev's famous speech denouncing Stalin and the cult of personality ushered in a second phase of unofficial art. But that exhilarating spell of freedom came to a halt in 1962, when Khrushchev attended a show of both official and unofficial art, and blasted the latter as anti-Soviet. ("Gentlemen, we are declaring war on you!") Still, Khrushchev had let the paint out of the tube, and the momentum behind unofficial art continued to pick up steam. More and more, unofficial artists began consciously, if cautiously, to criticize the system in which they were living. Liberated by the revelation of Western artistic developments and the relaxation of official parameters, emboldened by the interest of a new generation of private collectors inside Russia, Russian artists worked in a dizzying mélange of styles throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s.

By the late '70s, an artist's ability to move from style to style, sometimes incorporating several styles in the same work, had become an established approach. Works representing historical events in Russia were especially suited to this kind of fragmentation. The new aesthetic boasted a major intellectual influence, the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the "carnivalesque" or masquerade of styles. It also had a basis in social experience: the necessity of using a *personazhnyi avtor*, or an assumed persona, to manipulate one's way through the paradoxical nets of everyday Soviet life. Interestingly, such a disorientation of memory and identity was welcomed by the regime, which allowed officially approved artists also to work in this combinatory style.

Two important artistic trends, sometimes indistinct from one another, emerged from these twisted circumstances: Moscow conceptualism and Sots art. ("Sots" is a compression of the Russian words for "socialist realism" and "pop.") Both styles seemed to comment on the physical and mental depredations practiced by the regime. The former was more cerebral, making use of objects in space set alongside words, or taking up the *personazhnyi avtor* to tell stories that revealed the melancholy or the poignant durability of inner life in the Soviet Union. But Sots art directly incorporated references to official ideology in its work. It applied the style of American pop art to the iconography of the regime's propaganda.

Komar and Melamid were the principal founders of Sots art, and in September 1974 they and Sots burst onto the world scene. The occasion was the so-called "Bulldozer Show," an open-air exhibition outside Moscow that the authorities broke up with firehoses and bulldozers. The exhibiting artists had

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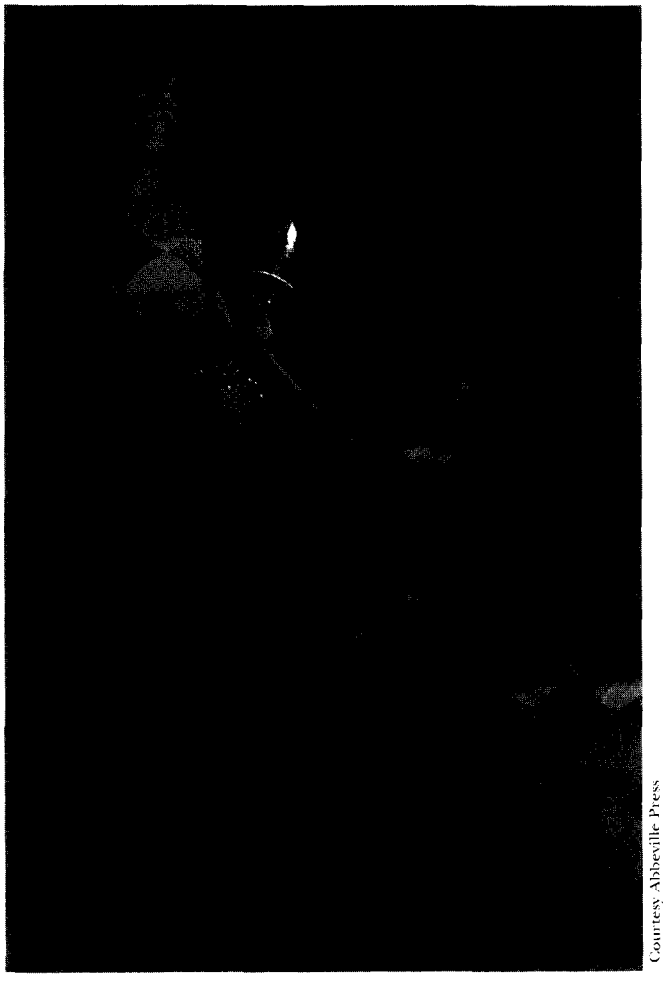
made sure to invite Western journalists, and reports of the assault circled the globe. From then on, while serious episodes of harassment still occurred, Russian nonconformist artists found it easier to exhibit their work, helped along by the atmosphere of détente.

American readers at that time learned a great deal about Komar and Melamid. Articles appeared in *The New York Times* and then in *Newsweek*, whose art critic became such a fan that in 1977 he accepted an invitation from the artists to collaborate with them on a project. Stunned by their expulsion—the result of a personal grudge, they told *The New Yorker* in 1986—from the youth section of the all-powerful Moscow Union of Artists some months before the Bulldozer event, Komar and Melamid, both Jewish, were understandably intent on emigrating to the West. The sudden acquisition of the dissident's halo had made them sympathetic figures to Western journalists. (The art critic Carter Ratcliff, in a monograph about the duo, had them heroically banished from the Union of Artists *after* the Bulldozer Show.)

The works that Komar and Melamid exhibited at the Bulldozer Show caught the eye of the expected Western reporters. One of their offerings was an oil painting called *Double Self-Portrait* (1973), a representative example of their Sots work at the time. According to Komar and Melamid, thugs destroyed it at the scene; but the artists recreated it. An oil on canvas, it portrays the artists' heads in the style of official portraits of Lenin and Stalin done before the latter's death. Westerners admired their audacity. *Double Self-Portrait* is an uncannily clever work of art. It has the style of Byzantine mosaics, a gesture that is as much a self-mockery as a careful iconoclasm; and its replacement of Stalin with an image of one of themselves could have been construed as an ironic act of suppression that served as a reminder of the Brezhnev regime's own attempts to cover up the reality of Stalinism in the wake of Khrushchev's revelations.

Unlike some other participants in the Bulldozer Show, who continued to be arrested, committed to mental institutions, or called up for military service, Komar and Melamid escaped similar harassment. Even though they had been ejected from the union, they were allowed to join the Graphic Artists' Organization, a dispensation that gave them precious access to freelance design work. Of course, their position in Soviet society couldn't have hurt them: Komar's parents were both attorneys (his father was a military lawyer), and Melamid's father served as a high-ranking government official. But the larger reason for their good fortune was that they possessed a calculated detachment from their subjects that was the equal of any official artist working directly for the regime.

Early on, Komar and Melamid mixed loaded content with a neutral attitude toward it. They did this so expertly that it is almost impossible to define their place in the nonconformist art scene during those years. An even more typically ingenious work than *Double Self-Portrait* is *Meeting between Solzhenitsyn and Boll at Rostropovich's Country House*, which was done in 1972. It was painted in a combination of Western modernist styles and old Russian icons, the writer's head being depicted in the manner of the latter. Since references to religion were still taboo as artistic subjects, the painting seems to make an equivalence between Western cultural trends and reactionary cultural-political conditions.



Courtesy Abbeville Press

NATASHA WITH A BUST OF STALIN, 1982-83, BY VITALY KOMAR AND ALEXANDER MELAMID

What serious dissident in the orbit of communism would satirize the liberal West in 1972? In Paris, fledgling pomos were just beginning to herald the death of the artist as individual; but Komar and Melamid, aided by the atmosphere of *personazhnyi avtor*, had jumped right over theory into praxis. In their work, they were nowhere to be found. They grew more and more popular with Western journalists and critics, who had a natural predisposition toward the plight of unofficial artists. And so, by the time a well-connected relative arranged a show for them at the prestigious Ronald Feldman Fine Arts gallery in New York in 1976, Komar and Melamid had acquired a reputation among commentators outside the art world as the supreme satirists of communist totalitarianism.

A critical and financial success, the New York show encouraged Komar and Melamid to apply for exit visas the following year. The regime refused the request, but the government's obduracy played into the duo's hands. They founded "TransState," a federation of "I-States," announcing that each of them was a nation unto himself. They had already developed what would become their trademark genre: performance art as a public relations *coup de théâtre*. At the time of the New York show, they had transposed the regulations from the Soviet internal passport into musical notation and arranged for a cellist in New York and pianists in cities throughout the West to play the Dada-ish composition simultaneously. The charged political background turned first the passport performance, and then the "I-States," into gestures of defiance, and the regime buckled under the bad press, finally allowing them to leave.

Arriving months apart in Israel in 1977, Komar and Melamid immediately set about trying to cause another stir. They built an aluminum "temple," carried it to the top of a hill overlooking the Valley of Hinnom, and burned Komar's suitcase. Then they read aloud what they had composed as an "addition" to the Torah—it was an account of their departure from Russia—and pulverized the temple into pieces. Nobody in Israel took much notice. (Ratcliff dimly wrote that "because they do battle with the imagery

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of superpowers, Komar and Melamid could find little in Israeli life to engage their attention.") Shortly afterward, they left for America.

In America, Komar and Melamid found much to do. Establishing themselves as artists critical of the Soviet regime had gotten them out of the Soviet Union. But the vanguard elements in the New York art world were keenly critical of capitalism and bourgeois morality. They were also highly adversarial toward official American policy with regard to the "evil empire." In neither respect, of course, had Komar and Melamid compromised themselves by their work in Russia. (Moscow knew about SoHo.) Indeed, their second show at Feldman, called *Catalogue of Superobjects—Supercomfort for Superpeople*, a kind of preparation for their arrival in the States, had mocked Western consumerism.

So the pair consolidated their Western art-world credentials with another collaborative piece. Called *Komar and Melamid, Inc., We Buy and Sell Souls*, it was a satire on the soulless American capitalism that had publicized their situation, enriched them, and helped them to leave the Soviet Union. The people whose souls Komar and Melamid solicited were some of the most powerful and influential figures in the art world. The duo "bought" their souls, and then advertised them for sale in a catalog of souls that they wrote themselves: it included Andy Warhol ("Who does not know the soul of this great artist?") and Norton Dodge, the preeminent collector of contemporary Russian art ("A soul containing a rare concentration of the most varied qualities").

In Manhattan in the 1980s, it was a golden age of artistic self-consciousness: art-historical appropriation; a multiplicity of styles; self-serving proclamations about the end of art; ideological unmasking; society as spectacle; society as "simulacra"—all floating around in a great gazpacho of irony. Komar and Melamid couldn't have landed in New York at a more auspicious moment. After all, they were experts in infinitely regressive self-distancing. As such, they could meet different prescribed criteria, all at the same time. And so they proceeded with the Americanization of *personazhnyi avtor*. "We're basically non-social persons, derelicts," Melamid explained to a reporter. "We work together as a unit and express no personal cause of our own, but a social tendency," said Komar on another occasion. "Whatever changes in the world balance affects us. As the earth turns, we turn with it."

Downtown artists, critics, and curators could talk about the deconstruction of socially fabricated meaning and value. They could dabble in the representation of depersonalizing and dehumanizing extremes. But Komar and Melamid had come from the omphalos of deconstructing, depersonalizing, and dehumanizing extremes—and they worked diligently to keep people from forgetting it. As Melamid told Ratcliff: "The real Stalin time was about life, death. Blood. It was a terrible time but a deep one, the real time. The cultural life of Russia under Stalin. The radio played Brahms, Beethoven. The time of the thaw was about nothing.... What was Yevtushenko?... What was it about? What was this bullshit?... What's the problem? What are you solving with this idiotic poetry?" Never mind that they were ten and eight years old, respectively, when Stalin died, and grew up during the thaw, the only happy period in twentieth-century Russian history since 1917. In New York they didn't want anyone to associate them with the unheroic thaw. Arriving in a culture that reduces catastrophic events to the melodramas of identity, these foot-fast, world-weary émigrés, heavy with the knowledge of life, death, and blood, grasped intuitively how to present themselves.

Thus Komar and Melamid's *Nostalgic Socialist Realism* series. It went way beyond radical chic. It was totalitarian chic. The most committed downtown insurgent couldn't beat it. The style got them into the Palladium, one of New York's hottest nightclubs in the '80s, where they staged a May Day extravaganza called *Lenin Lived, Lenin Lives, Lenin Will Live!* It won them a stream of critical praise, and it earned them purchases by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York's Museum of Modern Art, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Nostalgic Socialist Realism consisted of large oil paintings, heavily varnished into a glamorous sheen and skillfully executed in true socialist realist style. The subject was life under totalitarianism, especially under Stalin: Stalin glimpsed in the back of a car, peeking out from behind a curtain; Stalin admiring himself before a mirror; Stalin getting the gift of inspiration from the Muses (in *The Origin of Socialist Realism*). The paintings were voluptuously rendered, though their content was morally abhorrent. This was the standard-issue irony of the Moscow conceptualists' arrangement of "impossible things," and it was about 15 years old in the Russian context. But Komar and Melamid brought it up to date by postmodernizing it: "We don't believe in anything. We are not against communism, or against capitalism, or for either. Irony is above everything because nothing is

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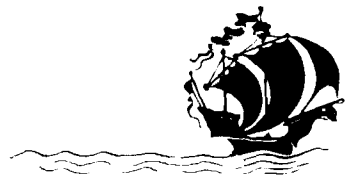

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taken seriously." Satirizing official culture, they ended up making use of official irony. The whole thing was . . . ironic.

And yet. Taking a large red banner in Brezhnev's Moscow and painting on it "Onward to the Victory of Communism," as Komar and Melamid had once done: that is irony. Portraying Stalin in socialist realist style in the United States in the mid-1980s: that is strategy. But Komar and Melamid's admirers, still awed by Russian experience and Russian suffering, continued to extol their work. So the pair gave their paintings another twist. They took the irony out of their "Onward" banner and brought it to America, where they made another large red banner, putting Stalin's image alongside the words "Thank you, Comrade Stalin, for our happy childhood." They made the irony sincere. (In the postmodern weather, of course, the sincerity could still appear ironic.) "Through Stalin art," Komar has said, "we could re-create our childhood." Since their childhood is so bound up with images of the dictator, they extend that tenderness toward Stalin himself. As they explained to *Flash Art* in 1985: "We try to understand Stalin, to love him as we did when we were kids. . . . The gulag and so on was something we *learned about later.* It was horrible—*really* horrible—but no one changes from childhood. It is like learning for example that your lovely girl is a prostitute. You are betrayed. You might hate her. But you still know she gave you the best feeling of your whole life."

In their flattering full-length portrait of Hitler, they were also being ironic *and* sincere. Visually, the painting absorbs the cultural atmosphere of irony automatically—this, despite the fact that there is no reason why a portrait of Hitler as a distinguished historical figure should be ironic in a society that is not divided on the question of Hitler's moral worth. So, to add a ballast of stable meaning to an irony in danger of faltering, Komar and Melamid explained the picture to *Flash Art.* It turns out that they were shattering taboos. "Hitler was a good thing for us Jews, a kind of Messiah. He threw Jews out of Jewish history into world history. Because of him, Jews are world-personalities. Every nation needs its own Holocaust to understand what is going on in this world. The person without suffering is not a real person. It says in the scriptures that every evil is a messenger from God. Hitler was a disaster *for Germans.* People forget that the Germans *lost* and the Jews *won.*"

Komar and Melamid had so many facile and conflicting meanings going that critics and viewers became afraid of choosing the wrong one. In their interviews, the pair found a way to say what they meant without appearing to mean what they said. Only ethical sophisticates could dare to seem so morally stupid. Or was it that only stupid people could impute sophistication to such deliberately empty ideas? Who, in the minatory shadow of SoHo, had the confidence to decide? Komar and Melamid's paintings embodied a permanently latent irony that disheartened articulate opposition into a permanently ironic self-suppression. They were not so much lying as deliberately displaying their power to make their own truth. Why the Soviet regime let two such precious assets get away remains a mystery.

As Komar and Melamid's career began to wane after the *Nostalgic Socialist Realism* series, they maneuvered to stay in the art world's, and the public's, eye. They were not used to being ignored. (In *Painting by Numbers,* Komar remarks: "Maybe it's our mission—Alex and mine—to give world some lesson.") Declaring themselves fed up with the shallowness and the hypocrisy of the New York art world, they moved across the river to Bayonne, New Jersey, a dying industrial town. There they painted socialist realist portraits of old factories and the few remaining foundry workers. They also conducted bus tours of the area that embarked from SoHo. ("Smells terrible here. Terrible smell." "You see this building? It isn't what you think it is. It's a toilet.") They conveyed the fruit of their Bayonne adventure back to shallow and hypocritical New York, where it went on display at their SoHo gallery. Then they left Bayonne and returned to their studio in downtown Manhattan.

With Stalin absent from *l'oeuvre de Bayonne,* however, critics felt safe to criticize. They called the show irritating and condescending. So Komar and Melamid turned the other chic. For their *Monumental Propaganda* show in 1993, they devised another collaborative performance/public relations/networking extravaganza, inviting artists and art-world figures to send in suggestions for the preservation of communist monuments. In the catalog essay that they wrote for the occasion, they did their best to capture evolving art-world taste by suggesting that Lenin and Stalin were transvestites. The show attracted some attention, but nothing like the noise of the *Nostalgic Socialist Realism* series. Their rising star was dropping out of sight. Which brings us to their new book, and their *Most Wanted* poll.

In 1993, Komar and Melamid hooked up with The Nation Institute, a nonprofit offshoot of *The Nation* magazine, and commissioned a public-opinion research firm to conduct a poll asking Americans what kind of painting they preferred. Based on the poll, Komar and Melamid made two paintings, *America's Most Wanted* and *America's Most Unwanted,* and exhibited them in SoHo in the spring of 1994. The results of the poll, alongside an interview with the artists, appeared in *The Nation* around the same time. The poll results and the interview have now been published in a book, which includes an essay by JoAnn Wypijewski, who edited the volume, and an admiring commentary by Arthur Danto.

A few weeks before *Painting by Numbers* hit the bookstores, *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* was released. The reception of the latter explains something about the nature of the former. *The Commissar Vanishes* is a riveting and depressing collection of photographs doctored by Stalin and his henchmen to reflect the changes in the communist hierarchy. As Stalin purged or cast out of favor one person after another—some with blood on their hands, some innocent of any crime—he had various artists and technicians touch up official photographs and make the non-grata image disappear.

As with Komar and Melamid's paintings, a regnant irony welcomed this ghoulish book. Some critics, while pointing out the horror the book revealed, mentioned what they found to be its comic effect. Partly, their reaction resulted from the book's presentation: "The Commissar Vanishes" sounds like a satiric operetta by Weill, and its editor, David King, introduced each set of manipulated photographs with headings like "Four, three, two, one. . . ," "Crowd Control," and "Long-term Friendships." (Hardy-har-har.) There was another reason why at least some reviewers had no trouble maintaining their lightheartedness. Which one of us, after all, has not wished that he could alter his past? Reviewing the book for *Slate,* for example, Luc Sante cheerfully concluded that "everyone has a little Stalin lurking somewhere within." And if it is widely accepted that everyone has a little Stalin lurking within, then we can forgive Stalin a little; or at least we can lighten up. (And here is Sante, in a review of Komar and Melamid's new book for *The New York Times Book Review,* describing them as "social critics who never fail to locate the comic aspect of a given subject. Trained in dialectical thinking, they are at ease with contradictions. They would probably be dissidents in any country, under any regime." Probably? Certainly! These are people for whom dissidence is a career move.)

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The notion that Stalinism is a quality of human nature prepares the ground for the notion that a totalitarian system has little to do with the actual ideology and the actual history that set it in motion. Thus, in his preface to *A Commissar Vanishes*, Stephen Cohen—who believes that moderate Bolsheviks such as Bukharin would have spared Russia if Stalin hadn't destroyed them—can instruct that "under Stalin's regime, which ruled the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953, photographs lied." Never mind that photographs (and newspapers) lied under Lenin's regime, too. And thus David King can describe Bukharin as the "immensely popular, liberal, and most humane member of the Bolsheviks." Never mind that Bukharin was planning with Trotsky to smash the independent trade unions, even as he was carefully and humanely, like a good liberal, imposing an ideological line on independent artists.

Komar and Melamid, too, have an aptitude for the imperative of mainstream adversarial culture in America, which is to keep things nice and equivalent. Melamid to Ratcliff:

> Of course, everyone knew all along that to a degree Russia was a slave-labor camp in Stalin's time. But it wasn't until we came here that we learned that in the American army during World War II there were special battalions for black people. That the U.S. Army was segregated. This would have been impossible in Russia.... Soviet Russia is ruled by fear, just like the United States. Russians are afraid of the KGB, food shortages. Here, people fear losing their jobs, AIDS.... KGB, AIDS—these are only symbols.

Can anyone blame Komar and Melamid for their tenderness toward Stalin, who provided equal opportunity for black people even as he was crushing the life out of everyone else, in a terrible time, but a deep one, a real time?

Painting by Numbers puts Komar and Melamid's trademark nostalgia on the offensive. As Melamid once bragged to Ratcliff, "I don't consider myself a naïve person who takes a long time to realize what's the situation. Just the opposite." And so this enterprise is a fine occasion for the pair to construct a superior attitude ("dissidents in any country") to a country that they grew up believing was superior to them no matter what they did. They attempt this by drawing connections by numbers between the Soviet Union and the United States every chance they get. This is partly because they will stretch reality to any proportions to keep themselves relevant, and partly because they cannot shake a deeply embedded habit of mind.

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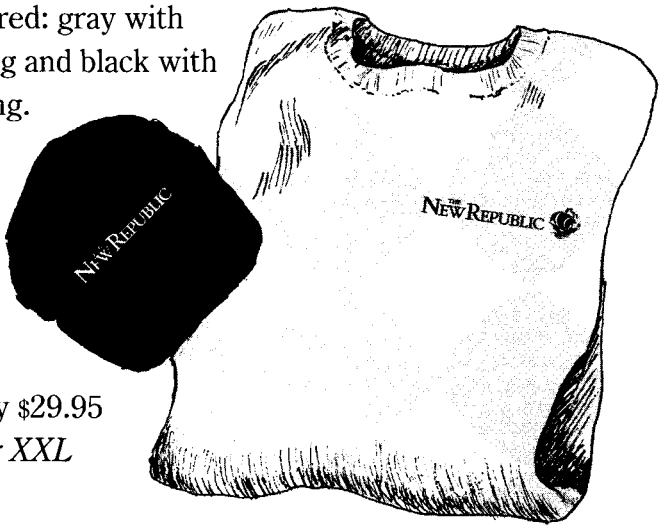

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Their book should have been called *The Commissar Reappears.* When they talk about America, they sound like the old hacks of *Pravda* sneering at the socially primitive West. Here are some of Komar and Melamid's gloating revelations (having lived in the United States for almost two decades, they have artfully retained and refined their grammatical mistakes in English):

> We made surprising discovery: in society famous for freedom of expression, freedom of individual, our poll revealed sameness of majority. Having destroyed communism's utopian illusion, we collided with democracy's virtual reality.
>
> This whole system, American system, runs on fear.
>
> I have never seen artists so desperate as they are now, in this society.
>
> [The American] art world is not democratic society but totalitarian one.
>
> In a way, pop art in America was like socialist realism in Russia, because the real pop art of America is not Andy Warhol but Sears.... And in that case, in Searstyle, I think behind the banal colors—almond, avocado, java—there is tragedy and the deepest fears of America, the fear of unemployment, the fear of death.

Experts at mocking prescribed aesthetic criteria, Komar and Melamid have mastered the art of meeting them. Here are excerpts from the interview with Wypijewski:

> Q: But how do you think people who aren't part of this [American] system express their aesthetic judgment?
> AM: ... People in ghettos, these young people, they spend an enormous amount of money for their dress. They care about the beauty of the thing, much more than people with a bigger income....
>
> Q: And what did you think of the responses you got from people in the focus groups and at the town meetings?
> AM: ... You know, the upper classes treat the lower classes like children....
>
> Q: What's the role of the collector?
> AM: ... I met many big collectors. Ninety-nine percent of them were either really stupid, illiterate people or just vicious people.... All of the museums in the United States exist only to serve these people.... These people, the rich people, the people in power, they build their castles, which are called museums.... Then these great people come in and they have their bar mitzvahs or wedding parties. It's just like the aristocrats and their castles....
>
> Q: Do you think that [in terms of art] America is not that dissimilar from the Soviet Union, only here the commissars are the collectors and curators?
> VK: Yes, sure....
>
> Q: In the same way that when you were in the Soviet Union you were painting pictures that countered the official art, do you think that the poll and the pictures that came out of it are a kind of parallel to that in the United States?
> AM: Definitely. This is a totally dissident art....

And what about the poll itself, and the paintings based on it? The paintings might not be "dissident"; but the poll is certainly "total." Indeed, everything about Komar and Melamid is total: the irony, the accommodation, the bullying. They once had the employees of a gallery humiliatingly repeat the Russian words for "fuck your mother" over and over again without telling them what the words meant, in order to prove that artists are tyrants and vice versa. "When I paint," Melamid once remarked, "I see I have Hitler in me."

Komar and Melamid found, amazingly enough, that the majority of Americans preferred the same painting. Americans overwhelmingly preferred the color blue. They wanted a landscape with mountains, a river, a bit of forest, and a single tree in the foreground. They desired to see George Washington in the painting, as well as three anonymous figures and two deer. What the majority of people did not want was a painting that was abstract. Even more incredible is that, when Komar and Melamid conducted the poll in countries throughout the world, everyone else wanted the exact same kind of painting, with local variations. And a global majority of respondents also shared Americans' aversion to abstract art, along with their liking for the color blue.

I don't mean to seem like such a square, but it does seem necessary to point out that no pollster could divine the artistic image that people had in their minds as they hurriedly answered 102 abstractly particular and discontinuous questions within 24 minutes. The questions themselves include queries about income and "ideology." They are either unquantifiable ("I only like to look at art that makes me happy—agree or disagree?"); or meaningless ("Art should be relaxing to look at—agree or disagree?"); or snide, intimidating, and irrelevant ("When you have a choice between two products of equal quality, how often are you willing to pay a little extra for a design or style you prefer?"; "How important would the appearance or design of the following be in your decision to buy that product: a pair of underwear?"; "How important to you is the way you dress?").

Komar and Melamid get a lot of mileage out of the supposed universal preference for blue: "I believe it reflects people's nostalgia about freedom. It's a very simple metaphor, and very deep at the same time," and so on, and so on. In fact, six years before they did the poll, long before they made their astounding discovery of the universality of the preference for blue, Komar and Melamid had a very precise association for that color. Explaining to Ratcliff, in an interview in 1987, what they thought of the way Gorbachev was transfiguring the Soviet Union, they said:

> This is cheap culture. Easy culture. Like Abstract Expressionism in America. It's nothing. It's empty. It's not good, it's not bad, it's just light blue culture. A culture of false optimism, which says, We're immortal, we're great, we will change the situation. Freedom. We will overcome. Overcome what? What? Your death?

Observe the scornful reference to Abstract Expressionism. The hostility to modernist abstraction is obsessive among nearly all contemporary Russian artists, critics, and curators, who—understandably—resent being cast by the Revolution outside the modernist line of descent. They feel embittered by Western art historians' glorification of the Russian avant-garde, and by the Western canon's omission of Russian art after the avant-garde period. So—lo and behold!—the world's Most Unwanted paintings are modernist and abstract.

With their poll, these opportunistic shtickheads, who never made a self-forgetful brushstroke in their lives, have devised the perfect wish-fulfillment. It allows them to trash the art world that has started to tire of them, and to strike a pose of solidarity with ordinary people, and to sneer at ordinary taste, and to advertise their superiority, and to make new friends who, as usual, will be too uncertain to take anything they do or say seriously. Terrified by the plurality of freedom in the West ("looking for freedom, we found slavery"), Komar and Melamid have created a totalizing picture of the world outside the enclosed system that once coddled their sense of their own importance. It is cheap and easy world, like prostitute who leaves you with best feeling of whole life. It is free world, which is pathetic world ready to give hug to fraudulence. What is this bullshit? What's the problem? What are you solving? What freedom? Communism dead, falsely optimistic capitalism dying. Only ism left is solipsism, I-State, where artist is tyrant. You hope for good, for true, for beautiful life? Please, do us favor. Go fuck your mother. Call us, too, so we talk about project for future. And excuse please ironical nature of two of us. Stalin made us nuts. •

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The Unionist

BY JAMES M. MCPHERSON

Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time by Robert Remini

(Norton, 796 pp., $39.95)

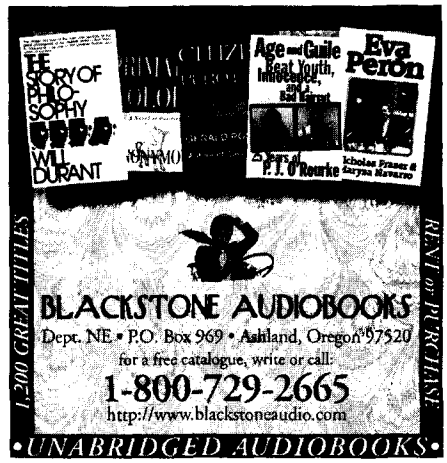
There was a time when most American schoolchildren (in the Northern states at least) could recite from memory the conclusion of Daniel Webster's second reply to Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina in 1830, and also Webster's opening statement in his Seventh of March speech on the Compromise of 1850. "When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union," intoned Webster on the Senate floor in 1830. When we look at the flag with its stars and stripes symbolizing the glorious Union, let us utter "no such miserable interrogatory as 'What is all this worth?' nor those other words of delusion and folly, 'Liberty first and Union afterwards,'" but instead "that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart—Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!" Twenty years later, during a crisis over the expansion of slavery that threatened the Union, Webster began his Senate speech on behalf of compromise with the words: "I wish to speak today, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American.... I speak today for the preservation of the Union. 'Hear me for my cause.'"

In his own time Webster was considered America's foremost orator, its most powerful constitutional intellect, its most eloquent champion of nationality. Today we might be hard put to find a schoolchild who knew anything about Webster, much less one who could recite his words. When Robert V. Remini told acquaintances that he was working on a biography of Daniel Webster, they would exclaim, "Oh yes, I know him. He wrote the dictionary!" Unfortunately, Noah Webster was no relation to Daniel Webster, though each in his own way was an extraordinary wordsmith. Along with his contemporaries Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster formed the now-forgotten "Great Triumvirate" of the ablest men ever to serve in the United States Senate—none of them to achieve the prize they all avidly sought, the presidency.

Like most Americans of his era, Webster was born on a farm, in New Hampshire. Unlike 99 percent of them, he attended college, graduating from Dartmouth in 1801 at the age of 19. He taught school for a time, to support himself while he read law, and he gained admission to the bar in 1805. Ambitious for political office and distinction from an early age, Webster was, like almost every other "respectable" New Englander, a Federalist. Demonstrating a remarkable talent for oratory in an age that rewarded such ability, he won a seat in Congress in 1812, launching a political career of 40 years in which he served ten years in the House, 19 years in the Senate, and four years as secretary of state. Like most Federalists, he became a National Republican and then a Whig when the Federalist party self-destructed in its opposition to the War of 1812 and its inability to make the transition from knee-breeches elitism to the leveling democracy of the age of Jackson.

Webster, too, had a hard time making the transition. Five times, from 1836 to 1852, he sought the Whig nomination for president. Despite his preeminence in the party and the nation, rivaled only by that of Henry Clay, Webster never succeeded in winning the nomination. (Clay was three times nominated and never elected.) The closest Webster came was in 1836, when the Whigs made no national nomination but gave their support to three regional candidates, in the hope of denying the Democrats an electoral majority and throwing the election into the House. This strategy failed, and Webster suffered the humiliation of carrying only Massachusetts (to which he had moved in 1816). He probably could have had the vice-presidential nomination in 1840, but he disdained second place, and so he missed his only real chance for the presidency when William Henry Harrison, the successful Whig candidate, died after a month in office.

Webster could not win the presidency in a democratic age because he did not believe that *vox populi* was *vox Deo*—and the *populi* knew it. Webster "was a



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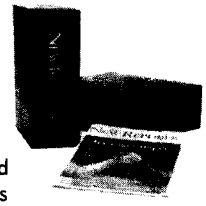

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thoroughgoing elitist," writes Remini, "and he reveled in it. He had started as a Federalist, continued to believe in Federalist doctrines ... and affirmed unquestionably the notion that the educated and wealthy should guide the nation's future.... Daniel Webster was out of touch with the democratic surge that swept the nation during the decades preceding the Civil War." As Webster ruefully admitted, he belonged "with generations that had gone by."

Webster compounded the political sin of elitism by his clientage relationship with wealthy men who sought favors from the government. As a successful lawyer who commanded large fees for cases he argued before federal courts even while he served in Congress, Webster made several fortunes during his life; and he lost them all to unwise speculations in Western land, to the expensive improvements on his estate at Marshfield, southeast of Boston, and to his penchant for fine wines, gourmet food, yachts, and art. He was incapable of managing money. He spent it faster than he earned it, and he was always in debt. As a consequence, he was dependent on loans (which he never repaid) and "retainers" from bankers and industrialists whose interests he championed in Congress. All the time he fought for the re-charter of the Second Bank of the United States, Webster was a director of the Bank and on a retainer from its president, Nicholas Biddle, to represent the Bank as counsel in legal cases.

As Remini accurately notes, the concept of conflict of interest did not exist in Webster's time. He was far from the only senator to accept private money from the very interest groups on whose behalf he spoke and voted in Congress. Yet Webster carried this practice farther than most. And he recognized that the relationship might not bear the light of publicity. He wrote to Biddle in 1833 complaining that "my retainer has not been renewed, or *refreshed*, as usual. If it be wished that my relation to the Bank should be continued, it may be well to send me the usual retainer" and, he added as an afterthought, "tell me, also, if you are careful to burn *all* letters."

This prostitution to monied interests caused Webster's political enemies to label him "Black Dan." This epithet resulted also from his reputation for untrustworthiness, and for alleged affairs with women other than his wife. (The evidence on the last matter is ambiguous.) One Virginia congressman called Webster in 1841 (in a private letter to a third party) "a blackguard & vulgar debauchee," a man who "but for his splendid talents, would be in jail or on some dunghill." Webster's swarthy complexion, high bulging forehead, dark deep-set eyes, and black hair also lent a physical dimension to the Black Dan sobriquet. At the same time, his devoted followers—and there were many in Congress and out, among the middling sort as well as the rich—called him "the Godlike Daniel." As Remini states, these contrasting labels point to the truth "that in Daniel Webster resided two distinct personalities, one cold, proud, untrustworthy, power- and money-mad; the other heroic, majestic in mind and speech, truth-seeking and statesmanlike."

The majestic, statesmanlike reputation stemmed not from major legislative accomplishments. Although Webster's name is attached to the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, which he negotiated as secretary of state to resolve a longstanding boundary dispute with Canada that had threatened to bring a third war with Britain, not a single important piece of legislation bears Webster's name despite his 29 years in Congress. His "Godlike" reputation was based mainly on his important orations, in Congress and elsewhere, which were heard by thousands and read by millions. Webster had a deep, sonorous voice. He could project that voice "whether speaking in the open air, or under a roof," according to one listener, so that "he could make himself heard to a great distance, apparently without effort, and without being unpleasantly loud to those who were near him." With an apparently photographic memory, Webster did his own research and wrote his own speeches with such intense preparation that he could speak for two or three hours without once looking at his manuscript, holding his audience spellbound throughout.

But it was their matter even more than their manner that gave Webster's orations the quality of greatness. More than anyone except Lincoln, Webster defined and shaped American nationality. Indeed, Lincoln drew upon Webster's speeches for his own understanding and exposition of the Constitution and the Union. Webster's reply to Hayne in 1830 (an address really directed at John C. Calhoun, author of the doctrine that a state could nullify a federal law) defined the Constitution not as a compact between sovereign states but as an indissoluble government authorized directly by the people. In words later echoed by the famous peroration of the Gettysburg Address, Webster declared in 1830 that the Constitution "is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." As a young man in New Salem, Lincoln read this speech and later told his law partner William Herndon that he "always regarded it as the grandest specimen of American oratory." Lincoln also read Webster's Seventh of March speech on the Compromise of 1850, in which the Godlike Daniel warned Southern secessionists that disunion could no more take place "without convulsion" than "the heavenly bodies [could] rush from their spheres, and jostle each other in the realms of space, without causing the wreck of the universe!"

Prophetic words! But Webster was a lawyer as well as an orator and prophet. In fact, he was probably the foremost constitutional lawyer in American history. And it was in this sphere that he made his greatest contributions to American nationalism. Webster argued no fewer than 180 cases before the Supreme Court, most of them while he was a member of Congress. Some of these were the most important constitutional cases in our history, in which Chief Justice John Marshall's court defined and expanded the powers of the national government to enforce the rights of contract (*Dartmouth College* v. *Woodward*, 1819), to create a national bank and protect it from state taxation (*McCulloch* v. *Maryland*, 1819), and to regulate interstate commerce to the exclusion of state laws (*Gibbons* v. *Ogden*, 1824). On more than one occasion, and particularly in *Gibbons* v. *Ogden*, Marshall's decisions borrowed language directly from Webster's briefs. Of the eight most important constitutional cases decided by the Marshall Court, Webster played an important part as a counsel for the winning side in five.

The issue that most plagued Webster during the final years of his life (he died in 1852), just as it plagued the nation and finally brought the "convulsion" of disunion against which he warned, was slavery. Like most Northern Federalists and Whigs, Webster opposed slavery and, early in his career, lost few opportunities to brand it, as he did in the debate with Hayne, "one of the greatest evils, both moral and political." But Webster acknowledged, like Lincoln, that as an institution protected in Southern states by the Constitution, slavery could be abolished in those states only by the voluntary action of their citizens. Still, the acquisition of new slave territory was another matter. Webster voted against the annexation of Texas because it would expand slavery, and he likewise opposed the Mexican War because it had the potential to do the same.

But then Webster made what seemed to be an abrupt 180-degree turnabout in the debate on the Compromise of 1850. The cause of this apparent reversal was Webster's fear for the survival of the Union. Southern states threatened secession if their "rights" to take slaves into the

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territories acquired from Mexico and to recover fugitive slaves who had fled to the North were not recognized and enforced. That was why, in his Seventh of March speech, Webster expressed support for a new and stronger Fugitive Slave Law (it was a part of the Compromise of 1850) and spoke against a federal prohibition of slavery in the New Mexico and Utah territories. Nature would keep slavery out of these regions; why insult the South by legislating exclusion? "I would not take pains uselessly to reaffirm an act of nature, nor to reenact the will of God."

Webster's influence with moderate Whigs helped to enact the Compromise of 1850. Abolitionists never forgave him for his apostasy, especially his support for the infamous Fugitive Slave Act. Their anguish was best captured by John Greenleaf Whittier in "Ichabod":

> So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
> Which once he wore!
> The glory from his gray hairs gone
> Forevermore!...
>
> All else is gone: from those great eyes
> The soul has fled:
> When faith is lost, when honor dies,
> The man is dead!

Many historians have praised Webster, however, for this last great act of his life, the sacrifice of his private antislavery beliefs to save his beloved Union. Remini seems to concur with this interpretation. "Webster suffered years of abuse by Free Soilers and abolitionists before the merit of his seventh of March speech ... [was] properly recognized and appreciated," he writes. "It took time but the intense furor over the Fugitive Slave Act slowly subsided."

This is considerably less than the whole truth. The furor over the Fugitive Slave Act never really subsided, and it flared higher than ever in 1854, after the president ordered the United States Army and Marine Corps to return the fugitive Anthony Burns from Boston to slavery. One of Webster's strongest supporters, the textile magnate Amos Lawrence, said after the Burns affair that "we went to bed one night old fashioned, conservative, Compromise Union Whigs & waked up stark mad Abolitionists." Would Webster have undergone this conversion if he had lived to witness Burns's return to slavery? That cannot be known. What we can know, however, is that historian David Potter's designation of the Compromise of 1850 as the "Armistice of 1850" is correct. It did not prevent secession; it merely postponed the crisis for a decade. Perhaps that was worth something, for when the crisis came the cause of national unity was led by a president greater even than the Godlike Daniel, but one who had learned his constitutional arguments for Union from Webster.

With this book, Robert V. Remini has completed his trio of biographies of the great political leaders of the Middle Period: Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and now Daniel Webster. Remini seems never to have met an anecdote he didn't like. Alas, a good many of dubious authenticity found their way into this volume. The story of how Webster demanded an apology from the eminent lawyer William Pinckney for insulting him during arguments before the Supreme Court, for example, does not ring true. "Now I am here to say to you, once for all, that you must ask my pardon, and go into court tomorrow morning and repeat the apology," Webster supposedly told Pinckney, "or else either you or I will go out of this room in a different condition from that in which we entered it," at which Pinckney "trembled like an aspen leaf." It also seems hard to believe that after Webster's notable reply to Hayne, another Southern senator said to him, "Mr. Webster, I think you had better die now, and rest your fame on that speech," whereupon Hayne himself declared: "You ought not to die: a man who can make such speeches as that ought never to die." Still, such tales enrich the narrative, and perhaps they illustrate a deeper truth. This life of Black Dan the Godlike Daniel is undoubtedly the fullest and the best that we will have for a long time to come.

JAMES M. MCPHERSON is a professor of history at Princeton University.

TRB *continued from page 6*

cheesy and sleazy as it has been, and the massive abuses of power by Nixon. (Clinton's affairs with women may constitute an abuse of his power over them as individuals, but it's difficult to see how this constitutes an abuse of his *office*, much less a violation of his oath.) It is a consensus that has withstood two democratic tests—the elections of 1992 and 1996. And who's to say the people were wrong to accept this trade-off?

Hence the public ambivalence we now see in the polls. People don't approve of what seems to have been going on in the White House, but they also seem reluctant to fire the president based on his job performance. Do self-protective lies about the most embarrassing aspects of his *private* affairs—even lies under oath—justify his removal, given the performance of his administration in other respects? Inside the Beltway, the obvious answer is yes. But in the rest of the country, the answer seems to be somewhere between "not quite" and "I wish this whole thing would go away." Americans seem to realize that their own tolerance of Clinton's personal excesses was tantamount to complicity in them—and they are cautious about overturning the government in a time of prosperity.

This view may be wrong, but it deserves a hearing in some formal legal or democratic process. How could that happen? Clinton has already had his two runs for office. We can't call a midterm referendum, and the 1998 elections for 435 disparate House seats wouldn't be a good proxy. Divisive as the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill case was, at least it finally came to a vote in the Senate. But that's not an option here.

It is in this sense that I almost hope Clinton will refuse to step down and dare his foes to impeach him. Impeachment alone provides a way to make all our elected representatives put up or shut up about this issue. As politicians, not jurors or judges, they will naturally weigh all the factors—including not only the president's criminal liability and personal disgrace, but also, appropriately, the evident public satisfaction with his job performance. (Not that anyone's thinking about it at the moment, but impeachment would also be fairer to Clinton than the current campaign of wiretapping and leaks.) Yes, impeachment would be wrenching and time-consuming. But the removal of a president is, at bottom, a political decision that should be made by political institutions. Far better to put American democracy through the crucible of impeachment than to let any president—even this one—be overthrown by lawyers and journalists.

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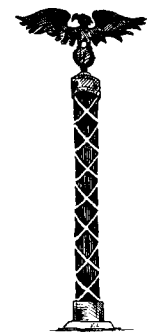
WASHINGTON DIARIST

All wet

IN MOST PLACES, GOOD WEATHER produces good cheer. In Washington, unseasonable weather produces a torrent of contentious press releases from environmental special interest groups—each one insisting that the day's errant temperature confirms its particular agenda. Take January 8, when the high here was 69 degrees—more than 20 degrees above normal. While most people were content to enjoy the respite from winter, the staff at Climate Lookout, a liberal environmental group, seized the occasion to hype the effects of global warming. "Dear Sweaty Reporter: Do you now see the need to control auto emissions?" read their press release, one of four weather-related missives to arrive at TNR that day. "Today's heat proves global warming is not a distant problem, but is choking us today." Truth in Science, a Christian organization skeptical of global warming, issued its own release. "Today God stuck out His tongue at the environmentalists.... He proved that it will be warm or cold at His discretion. Stop worrying. Have faith. We're in good hands." I called both associations and asked them how one day in the sweep of history could be so significant. To their credit, the folks at Climate Lookout confessed it was all just a publicity ploy. Over at Truth and Science, however, faith remained unshaken. Lucy Galt, the spokeswoman who wrote the press release, stuck by her story and seemed downright offended by my question. "The most important weather system of all time was just one day long—the creation of night and day," she said. "Don't you think that was statistically significant?"

LAST APRIL, WHEN A SPELL OF heavy rain hit Washington, the Association for the Advancement of Sound Water Policy proclaimed: "Today's downpour proves once again there is no dry spell. Earth is bathed in natural, pure, and clean water that has been happily consumed by generations.... It also proves the globe has a natural purification system. We don't need the heavy hand of government to tell us what type of water we can drink." It turns out that the primary sources of funding for AASWP—don't try to pronounce the acronym, please—are manufacturers that dump waste into Western rivers. The group argues that environmental regulation is limiting our freedom to choose what type of water we can drink. To AASWP, the rivers aren't polluted—they're "enhanced." According to its newsletter, "enhanced water" is so rich in nutrients that it's the logical successor to fluoridation and particularly beneficial to malnourished inner-city kids.

ALAS, AASWP'S SCIENTIFIC STANdards seem no more rigorous than those of Climate Lookout or Truth and Science. I called AASWP and asked them to explain the dangerously low rainfall in Werty, Iowa—a fictitious town. "Of course, that's exactly what we're talking about. I'm glad you brought it up: Werty is proof positive," explained spokesman Rick Johnson. "Low rainfall means the Earth doesn't need more water. It has just the right amount." Three weeks later, I called Johnson back and told him since our previous conversation it had rained almost nonstop in Werty. "Fantastic! That's just what we're talking about," he said. "The Earth is bathing in H-Two-O, and Werty got it." I reminded Johnson that he had recently said it was good that Werty was dehydrating. Could he name a time when the weather indicated something bad was going on? "The Egyptian plagues," he said.



TWO YEARS AGO, I CALLED A RADIO station in Northern Virginia and asked to be one of their weather watchers. You've probably heard weather watchers on your local station early in the morning. They're regular men and women—just like me!—who come on the air after the meteorologist and describe the climate outside their windows. Remarkably, weather watchers just a few blocks from each other frequently report radically different atmospheric conditions. You see, it's not easy to become a weather watcher—the competition is cutthroat. (I waited nearly a year for my tryout.) So watchers try to distinguish themselves from one another to stay in the good graces of programming directors. Some have stage names—most make very bad puns—and a few even rhyme their entire report. Mainly, though, they exaggerate. One rainy day a few months ago, a weather watcher near Dupont Circle called the conditions a "drizzle." Upping the ante, the watcher in Woodley Park—just one subway stop north—called the sprinkling a "downpour." The watcher in nearby Bethesda insisted it was "torrential." (According to the National Weather Service, there was less than a half-inch of precipitation across the region.) The most extreme weather watcher of all is the one at my station, Weather Watcher Gail Force. She goes last in the rotation and refuses to be outdone. In 1995, she predicted a tornado seven times. According to the National Weather Service, there were none.

FOR THE MOST PART, METEOROLOgists despise weather watchers. Meteorologists think of themselves as scientists trained in forecasting, yet it is the watchers—amateurs making amateurish observations from their bedroom windows—who have the public's trust. In fact, according to an annual poll by the University of New Mexico, the public has considered meteorologists less reliable than astrologists every year since 1973. That was the same year several high-profile Oregon meteorologists got caught taking money from ski resorts in exchange for predicting snow. One small Oregon newspaper published a series on junkets that weathermen take to exotic beaches and ski chalets—to "learn about different weather." Jim Sackman, a weatherman who has worked in five different Oregon cities, defended his all-expense paid trip to Maui: "We send crime reporters into the worst neighborhoods to understand and experience what they are writing about. I don't see why I shouldn't go to different climates to report as well."

TO REGAIN THE PUBLIC'S CONFIdence, a trade group of weathermen lobbied radio and television stations last year to give meteorologists much more airtime. As the theory goes, if weathermen explain their predictions—instead of simply announcing them—viewers are more likely to believe the forecasts. It sounded like a reasonable idea—smart enough for a handful of local stations nationwide to try it out. But all of them have since switched back. Notwithstanding the Weather Channel's exciting new commercials (*TV Guide* ranked them among the year's best), weathermen using computer models to plot cloud systems don't make for good television. Viewers only tuned in during weather catastrophes—like floods or hurricanes—when weather had become a news story, anyway. Never fear, though, the trade group has another plan. It is now urging stations to enrich weather reports by including information about global warming. I don't know if it will really boost their ratings, but I'd be willing to bet at least a few more people in Washington will be watching.

STEPHEN GLASS

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